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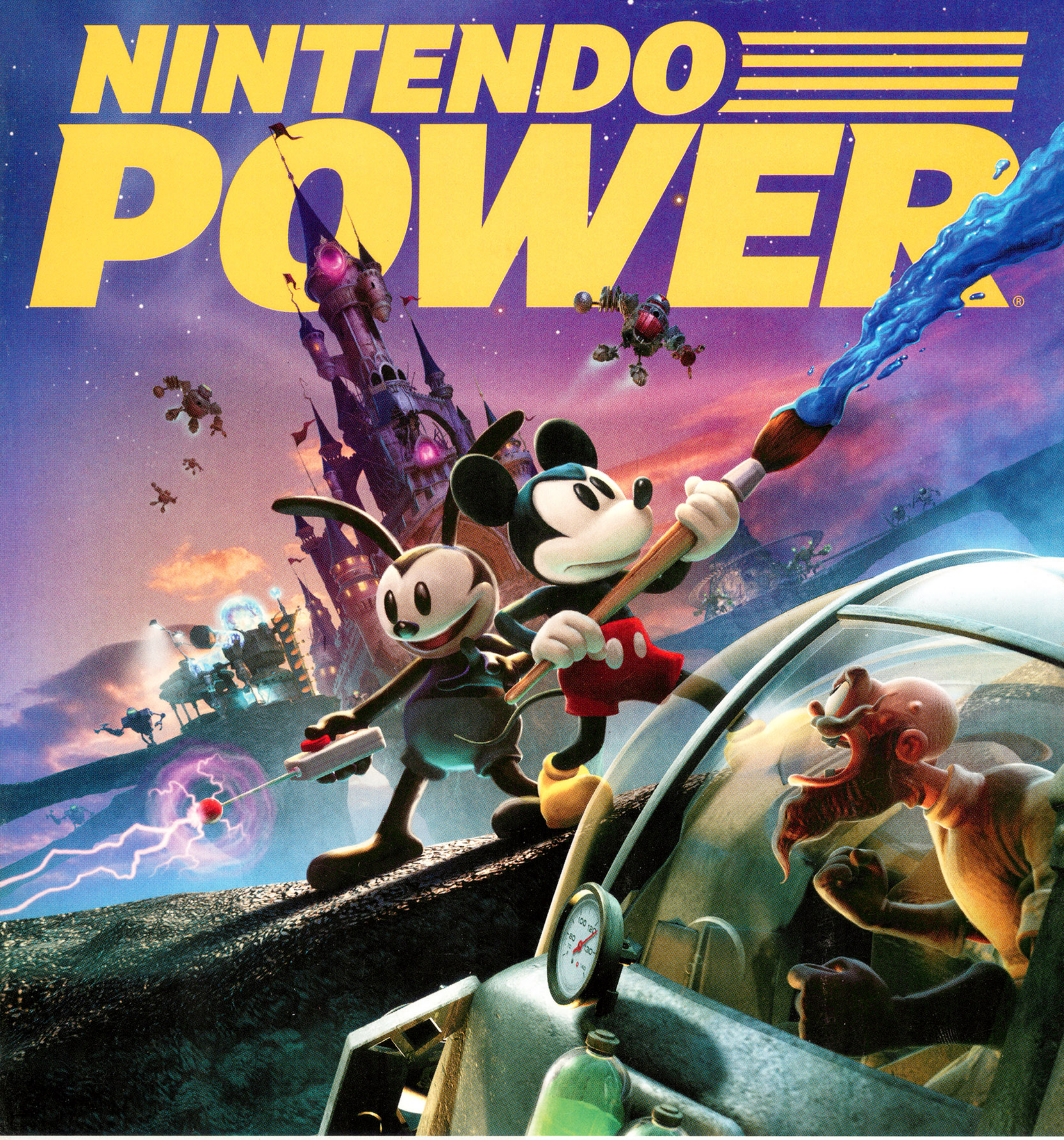

Epic Mickey: The Power of Two • Epic Mickey: Power of Illusion • Mario Tennis Open • Kid Icarus: Uprising • Xenoblade Chronicles • The Last Story

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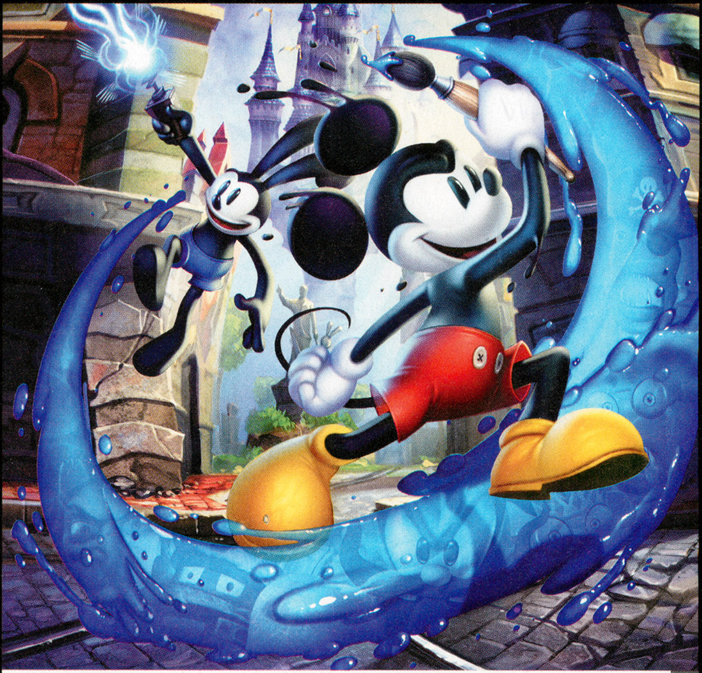

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Ahah... Link!
I have been waiting for you!
Heh heh heh...

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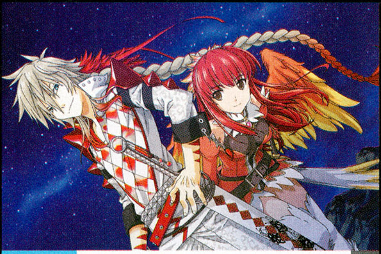

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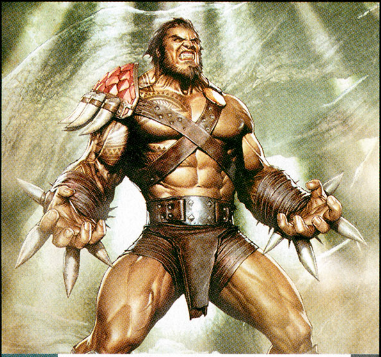

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DS = NINTENDO DS
DW = DSiWARE
N3DS = NINTENDO 3DS
NES = NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
SNES = SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
Wii U = Wii U
WW = WiiWARE

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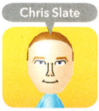
Pulse

Proving 'Em Wrong



I love it when pundits poke fun at Nintendo. As a fan who is always pulling for the company to deliver magical new experiences, I used to be annoyed whenever someone would, say, mock the name of the Wii console, claim that motion controls would never take off, or knock Nintendo for courting new audiences. But the company has proven the naysayers wrong time and time again—most recently with the incredible turnaround story of the Nintendo 3DS handheld, which had higher first-year sales than even the legendary Nintendo DS—I've noticed that Nintendo seems to do best when the fanatics are predicting its doom.

Much of the hand-wringing over Nintendo's new ideas stems from the fact that some people struggle with how to process revolutionary products—they naturally question something that doesn't fit their preconceived image of what they think they want. It takes a bold company to say "we know better," and while Nintendo hasn't *always* made the right call, its audacity has changed gaming for the better more often than not.

So, let 'em have it, haters! Talk trash about touch-screen controllers so the Wii U system will be *sure* to rock! When the mad geniuses at Nintendo have something to prove, they nearly always come through.

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

1ST LOOK: THE NEXT SKYLANDERS
2011 POWER AWARDS SPECIAL
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Exclusive new look!
KINGDOM HEARTS 3D
New Gameplay! New Story! New Worlds!
KID ICARUS: UPRISING Hands-on with online multiplayer

V276 **MARCH 2012**

Hi, everyone! This is Dr. Albert W. Wily, reminding you all to contribute to my Kickstarter fund! Those robots ain't gonna make themselves! OK, not really; April Fools! As usual, it is I, The Hoff, and I'll be responding to your questions and comments once more. There's no special letter request this month; we got so many great responses to Vol. 275's question that it's going to take two issues to run them all.

LETTERS

Zelda Fit Plus?

I am a personal trainer, runner, and obsessive Zelda fan. The exercise-game craze that came with the Wii technology is great and all, but I'm hoping it's just the tip of the iceberg. Skyward Sword and its introduction of the stamina meter was a great example of the fact that even Link gets tired! Think of all the miles he runs, blocks he pushes, and ladders he climbs within each game. I don't know how Nintendo will do it, but I want the full Zelda workout experience within the next 20 years, or I will be one disappointed gamer!

—THUNDERBIRD

I think the most crucial part would be having Navi as your trainer. If she seems demanding now, just imagine how pushy she'll be when she's whipping you into shape.

Countdown to Oblivion

I can't wait until Virtue's Last Reward (formerly Good People Die) comes out! I'm waiting until it comes out to get a Nintendo 3DS, so I really hope that the world doesn't end before then! That'd kind of suck. **—MOMO**

Yes. If the world were to suddenly come to an end, missing out on that game would totally be the worst part, wouldn't it?

Oh Yeah, Uh Huh, Daisy!

I screamed when I saw that you featured Princess Daisy in the Star Power section of the March issue! As a die-hard Daisy fan since the GameCube, its great to see her in the spotlight for once instead of being snubbed behind that...lesser princess. Frankly, I'd love to see her in the next Super Smash Bros. game as a playable character, bringing her spunky tomboyishness to a series that needs more females anyway! Ultimately, though, Nintendo needs to give her a game all her own, revisiting the exotic worlds of Sarasaland. Thank you so much for featuring her; you've done a great service to the world! **—XAVIER G.**

You're very welcome! Obviously, we love Daisy, too. But purely in a friendly way; we wouldn't want to incur Luigi's wrath, after all.

Saddle-Sore

In Volume 276, Josh G. asked what you guys look like and you guys left a picture with all of the staff as Yoshis. But if you guys were Yoshis, Mario would constantly be riding you guys and you wouldn't have time to review games!

—AMENBO

You might be surprised at how many work hours we've lost thanks to Mario jumping off our backs to safety while we fall helplessly into pits.

I just want to thank you on behalf of myself and all of the die-hard "Xeno" game fans for the incredible coverage you are giving to the upcoming Xenoblade Chronicles for the Wii. I was absolutely ecstatic when I first heard the news that a release date was announced for this widely acclaimed game! Thank you, Nintendo Power, for your support of this game!

—TIGMO55

future sight

Xenoblade Chronicles—the long-awaited Wii epic about a clairvoyant sword—foretells a brighter tomorrow for Japanese RPGs.

Under Cover

Out of curiosity, how and when do you guys choose the game to be showcased as the cover story of each issue? Is there a queue of games you plan to cover? If so, you should definitely make sure Animal Crossing and Darksiders II are in that queue! **—RHINOBOT**

We usually do have a selection of major games lined up that we're considering for covers, but ultimately it's decided in the same way we decide everything else: a fist fight, a dance-off, or by blindly throwing projectiles at a dartboard.

Cheesy Question

In the December issue's Power Profile, Alex Neuse's favorite food was listed as macaroni and cheese. What you failed to tell us is whether the macaroni and cheese is the kind you get in a box, or if it's made from scratch with real cheese, milk, and butter. Either one would fit what we've seen of Neuse's work, but as an insight into his personality, I'd like it if you could make it clear which one was meant. **—LEWANUT**

To find out the answer to your inquiry, we went straight to the source. Here's what Alex had to say: "If you're talking about boxed macaroni and cheese, there really is only one worth discussing, and that is Kraft Macaroni & Cheese. But as I grow older, the boxed stuff, while still nice, doesn't quite cut the mustard, so I prefer a nice artisanal restaurant mac and cheese. Lately, the S'mac from The Red Room in Santa Cruz, California, has been the reigning champion, but their quality has only recently started going downhill, and I am now on the prowl for a new fave."

Cheat = Cheap

After reading your newest issue, I have to agree with your Dodongo Dislikes, which talked about cheaters on Maka Wuhu in Mario Kart 7. Maka Wuhu is one of my favorite courses, but it's a shame to see people online abusing a cheat on such a good racetrack.

—META ZEKROM

Coasting By

I noticed in your March 2012 issue that you removed RollerCoaster Tycoon 3D from the Game Forecast. What happened?

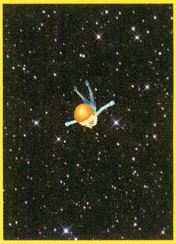
—SCOTT G.

We removed RollerCoaster Tycoon 3D because we expected that it would be in stores close to the time you got the issue. However, the game got delayed, so it's back on the list. You can check out our preview on page 41.

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

You're a filthy *liar*! I don't think you're man enough to eject Chris Slate into space. For that matter I don't even think you have the technological know-how. Do you even know the math and physics needed to actually launch a human being into space from Earth's surface? *I didn't think so!* Unless, of course, you do know how and you actually did, in which case I invite you to *prove it*! Thank you. That is all. **—LOZGOD**

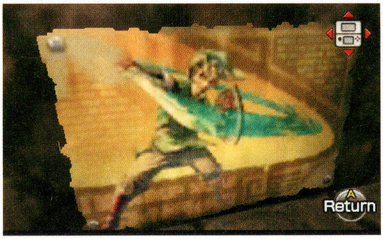
The Hoff says: How dare you question the authenticity of my claim!? I'm not entirely sure I should dignify this with a response, but if you want some proof, here you go:



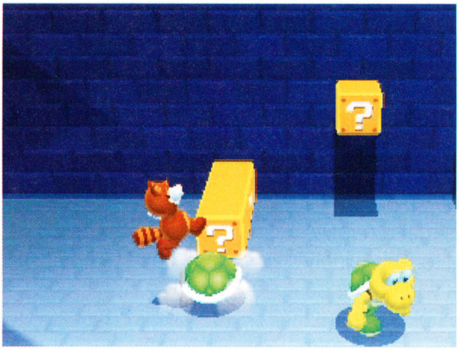
Poster Boy

In Gerudo's Fortress in The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D, I rolled into a crate up against the inside wall of the fortress, and guess what was behind it? A poster of Link from Skyward Sword! Why would the Gerudo keep a poster advertising their escaped prisoner on the wall of their own fort? **—AWD**

Well, Skyward Sword takes place many years before Ocarina of Time. Could the Gerudo have respect for the hero from that era? Either that or Nabooru's crush on Link is even worse than we thought.



I got Super Mario 3D Land and I was so obsessed with it that I had a dream about it. I was a Koopa and I was walking and Mario stepped on me. I did not enjoy being that Koopa. —**RUPPEE INSPECTOR**



Have you ever had a dream about a video game?

My video game-inspired dream was about Wario Land 4. I played the role of Wario when I escaped the old pyramid after defeating the Golden Diva. When I was a safe distance away from the crumbling pyramid, the black cat turned into Princess Shokora, but instead of kissing me on the cheek, she gave me a long, passionate kiss on the lips! Best dream I've had in years! **—SCOTT H.**

I once had a dream where Sonic and friends came to London for the 2012 Olympic games. They came up to the rickety old house they were gonna stay at and Classic Sonic rang the doorbell and said, "I'm waaaaaitiiing." Then he and Modern Sonic began arguing about how annoying that line was. Knuckles just wanted to get inside because it was a cold night. When the pretty blonde hostess came out they all magically moved from the porch to the lawn. As soon as Shadow saw her he kinda twitched and started repeating, "Maria" in his dramatic voice. Knuckles had to explain that Shadow was a robot and dragged him off to fix him, all with Shadow still saying, "Maria." Then I woke up. **—TATLTAILS**

I dreamed that there was a war going on between Mario and Bowser's new army of Piranha Plants. The Piranha Plants gobbled up all of Mario's friends and then Sonic and Link came. Link, for some reason, joined the Piranha Plant army, and Sonic joined Mario. Link soon knew the downside of being evil when he was eaten by Sonic. Sonic was then eaten by Mario. Mario was then eaten by a giant Waddle Dee who was eaten by a Piranha Plant. I'll never forget that crazy dream. **—BAT BRAIN**

I had a dream that I was in a scene from *Casino Royale*, playing poker against Geese Howard. After Geese muttered something unintelligible, the guy next to me whispered, "He's bluffing! He already said that in Fatal Fury." Geese must have overheard, because he slammed his fist down on the table and shouted, "*I said that in Fatal Fury Animated Adventures!!*" **—ALT**

Although I've had many weird video game-inspired dreams, I'd have to say there's one that really takes the cake. I once dreamed that I was a morbidly obese woman being chased by two little dogs in a parking garage, all as Phoenix Wright watched with a smile on his face. He could have at least chased them away by shouting, "Objection!" **—BOBBYM255**

Tetris. My whole life I've had dreams about Tetris. **—DRAGON BREATH**

After having played Skyward Sword every day for two weeks straight, I dreamed I was flying around in the sky near Skyloft, except that I was just flying on my own, with no Loftwing to help me. It was more like skydiving. Lots of other people from Skyloft were skydiving with me—I remember Karane specifically—and every time it looked like we were about to hit the ground, it turned into another layer of clouds, with more sky and clouds underneath. We casually traded skydiving tips as we fell, like it was totally natural to be free-falling through endless layers of clouds. It was awesome! **—KIWI KENOBI**

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Understand that the magazine staff is separate from Nintendo; we don't make the games.

Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

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NOT A TEAM, A TIME BOMB

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What Nintendo fans think, want, and do

The SCORE

WEIGH IN ON NEXT MONTH'S TOPICS AT WWW.NINTENDOPOWER.COM/POLLS.

AT THE CLIMAX OF METROID: OTHER M...

ADAM PERISHED 56%

ADAM SURVIVED 44%

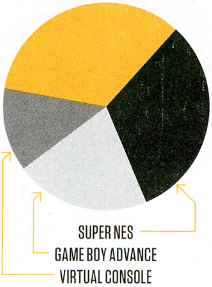
IF YOU COULD REVIVE AND FIGHT WITH PREHISTORIC CREATURES LIKE IN FOSSIL FIGHTERS, WOULD YOU?

57% **Yes.**

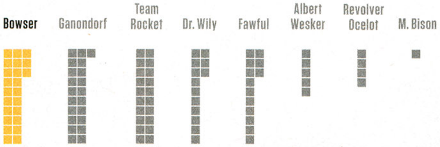
43% **No. Sounds Dangerous.**

HOW DID YOU FIRST PLAY THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST?

SADLY, I'VE NEVER PLAYED IT



WHICH ANTAGONIST MOST DESERVES TO BE IN A STARRING ROLE?

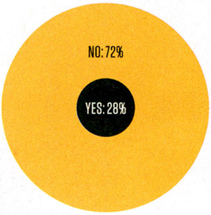


WHAT IS THE COOLEST WEAPON FROM THE ORIGINAL MEGA MAN?

THUNDER BEAM

Thunder Beam 32% • Fire Storm 17% • Rolling Cutter 12% • Ice Slasher 12%
Hyper Bombs 12% • Magnet Beam 8% • Super Arm 7%

DOES THE ESRB RATING AFFECT YOUR GAME PURCHASES?



WHO WOULD BE THE BETTER MONARCH?

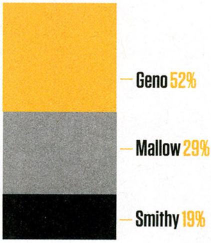
King Hippo (Punch-Out!!)

83%

King Slender (Pro Wrestling)

17%

THE SUPER MARIO RPG CHARACTER DUE FOR A COMEBACK:



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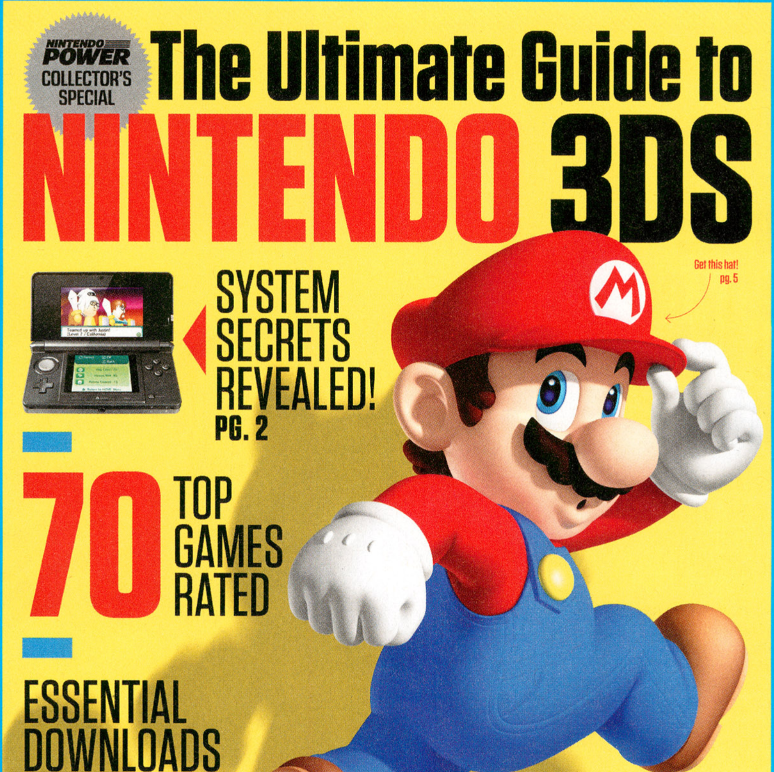

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The Ultimate Guide to
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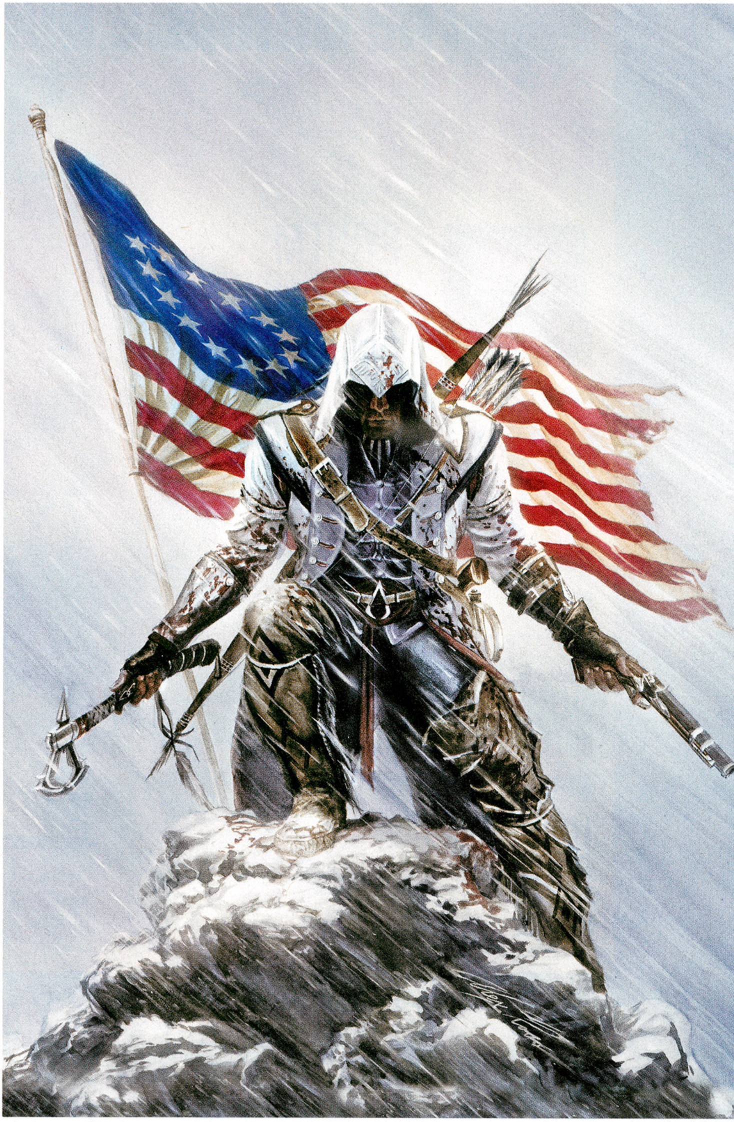


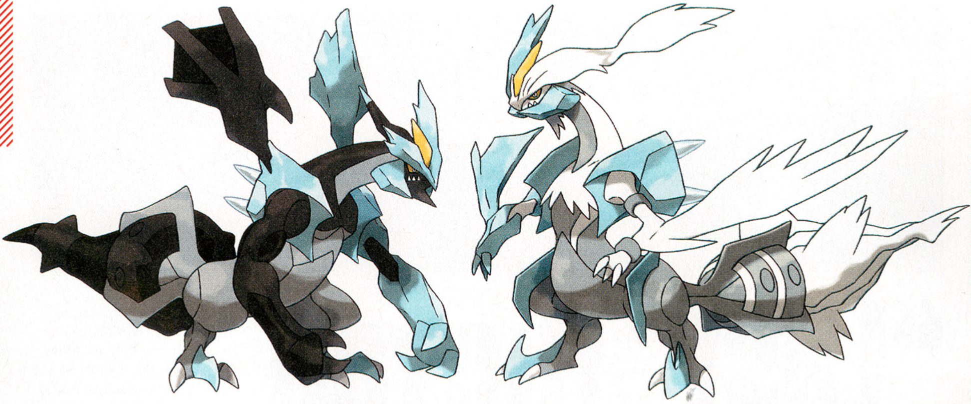
Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death

Assassin's Creed III explores a pair of new frontiers: the American Revolution and Wii U.

THE THOUSAND-YEAR-OLD BATTLE between the Templar and the Assassin's Order will come to a head later this year on the Wii U console. Ubisoft has revealed the first details of Assassin's Creed III, and it's sounding like the most ambitious entry in the series yet.

You'll be transported to the cities of Boston and New York during the late 1700s, and explore the Revolutionary War from the perspective of Connor, the half-Native American protagonist, as he works with George Washington and Ben Franklin to unravel conspiracies and plunge a hatchet into the domes of his opponents.

But that's only two-thirds of it. According to Ubisoft, one third of the game will leave the cityscapes in favor of a massive, open countryside where Connor can hunt animals, climb trees, and track his fleeing Templar targets. He'll also be able to dual-wield weapons and assassinate enemies on the run, adding to the hectic ballet of death that is Assassin's Creed. **—HOLLANDER C.**



Back in Black (and White)

Pokémon Black Version 2 and Pokémon White Version 2 are heading to the Nintendo DS.

NINTENDO HAS SHAKEN up the traditional Pokémon release schedule by announcing a pair of numbered follow-ups for Pokémon Black Version and White Version instead of a traditional third variant along the lines of 2009's Pokémon Platinum Version. Pokémon Black Version 2 and Pokémon White Version 2 will be released this fall, both for Nintendo DS. Outside of that, virtually nothing is known about the two games except that each features a new variation of the Pokémon Kyurem as its cover model: Black Kyurem for Pokémon Black Version 2, and White Kyurem for Pokémon White Version 2. —**CASEY L.**

New Evidence

Get the latest clues about Professor Layton vs. Ace Attorney.

NEWS *from* JAPAN

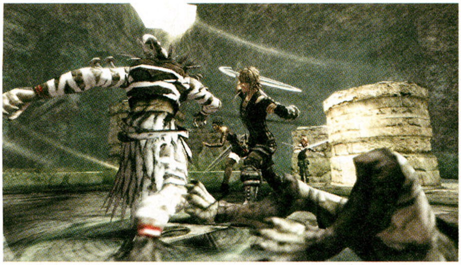
EVER SINCE it was announced more than a year ago, Professor Layton vs. Ace Attorney has been one of the most intriguing titles for the Nintendo 3DS handheld—despite the fact that the game hasn't yet been confirmed for North America and that few details have been revealed. Recently, however, we had the chance to speak to producer Hironobu Takeshita of Capcom to track down some info about this promising crossover. (And for more of Takeshita's insights, check out our Power Profiles interview on page 70.) —**CHRIS H.**

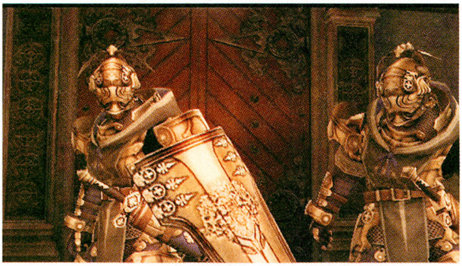
NINTENDO POWER Where did the idea for the Professor Layton vs. Ace Attorney crossover come from?
HIRONOBU TAKESHITA Capcom received a proposal directly from president [Akihiro] Hino of Level-5. Both companies examined the proposal and decided to go ahead on the collaboration.

How does the collaboration between Capcom and Level-5 work?
The game is being developed by staff members at both companies. Our corporate cultures and attitudes are quite different, so we discuss every aspect and split up responsibilities: Ace Attorney parts are dealt with by Capcom, Professor Layton parts by Level-5; graphics are by Capcom, programming by Level-5; and so on.

How is development on Professor Layton vs. Ace Attorney proceeding so far?
It's been a while since we announced the title, but we are making steady progress and look forward to your continuing anticipation and support!

Is there any reason we haven't heard about a North American release of Professor Layton vs. Ace Attorney? (A lot of the fans over here are getting restless!)
I'm afraid I can't provide any details about that at this time, but we are very grateful for the support of all our fans.





"Last" Hurrah

Xseed is bringing Hironobu Sakaguchi's **The Last Story** to Wii in North America.

2012 IS PROVING to be a great year for Wii RPG fans. Monolith Soft's Xenoblade Chronicles is set for release on April 6, and when players set down their controllers after that lengthy adventure, another RPG epic will be waiting in the wings. In the February 22 Nintendo Direct broadcast, Nintendo of America's president, Reggie Fils-Aime, announced that The Last Story would be coming to North America this summer, courtesy of third-party publisher Xseed. The game has already launched in Europe, and the North American version is expected to use the same well-received localization.

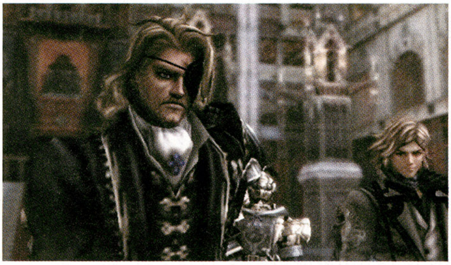
The Last Story is the newest brainchild of Hironobu Sakaguchi, who designed, directed, and/or produced all of the early games in the Final Fantasy series. After leaving Square, he established a small studio named Mistwalker, which designed two RPGs for the Xbox 360, as well as Away: Shuffle Dungeon, the never-localized ASH: Archaic Sealed Heat, and both Blue Dragon games for the Nintendo DS. But Sakaguchi was stung by criticism that he was still relying on last-gen game design, and he vowed to create something more progressive with his Wii debut.

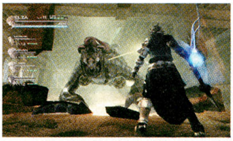
The result is an RPG that borrows heavily from third-person action games, offering a battle system with real-time elements that include stealth, use of cover, the ability to fire a crossbow in first-person mode, and a party full of spellcasters to back up the game's sword-swinging hero. The dungeons and overworld areas of The Last Story are tightly designed—like levels of a linear action game—and full of clever enemy placements and battlefield gimmicks that offer multiple ways for players to proceed. The battle system is so robust that it can even support a variety of online missions in which players can use the characters and equipment they've earned in the single-player game.

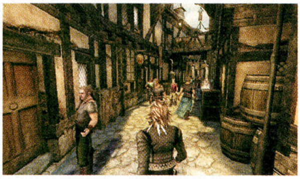
The RPG elements can be found in the vast hub town of Lazulis Island, which is filled with secrets and side quests, and in the conventional systems of gaining levels, equipping gear, and upgrading weapons. The game also features a large cast of likable support characters who serve in the hero's mercenary troop, and their frequent battle chatter and individual subplots provide a strong sense of party camraderie.

The Wii console hasn't previously been home to a great RPG library, but Nintendo and Xseed are certainly making up for lost time now. Check back next month, when we'll take a deeper look at Sakaguchi's surprising answer to the question of how best to evolve the very genre he helped create.

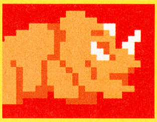
—CASEY L.







A WINNER IS...
New StreetPass Mii Plaza puzzles.



DODONGO DISLIKES...
Moving.

Prime Time

Activision rolls out Transformers: Prime—The Game on Wii, Nintendo 3DS, and Nintendo DS this fall.

YES, IT MAY be aimed toward a younger audience, but CG-animated television show *Transformers: Prime* is nonetheless an entertaining program for longtime fans of the robots in disguise. (You know, people like us.) Each week you get to see Optimus Prime and the Autobots square off against Megatron and the Decepticons. Now you can actually take part in this conflict in Activision's Transformers: Prime—The Game for all three current Nintendo systems.

We know that Now Production (NowPro) is handling the development duties on the Wii and N3DS versions while Altron tackles the DS edition. Both game-makers are familiar with working on licensed properties: NowPro made Bakugan Battle Brawlers for Wii, and Altron has developed several SpongeBob SquarePants and Phineas and Ferb games for the DS.

Although we don't have any other details at this moment, you can expect to learn more about Transformers: Prime—The Game in the coming months. —**JUSTIN C.**

Nicktoons take on baseball's best in 3D!
27 TOP NICKTOONS
nickelodeon
NICKTOONS MLB 3D
NINTENDO 3DS
Playable in 2D and 3D. 3D mode for ages 7+. See back.
Go yard with new Nicktoons players and updated MLB® rosters.
New ballparks and game modes including Showdown, Frosty Freeze Toss and more.
175 MLB® PLAYERS - ALL 30 CLUBS
NINTENDO 3DS

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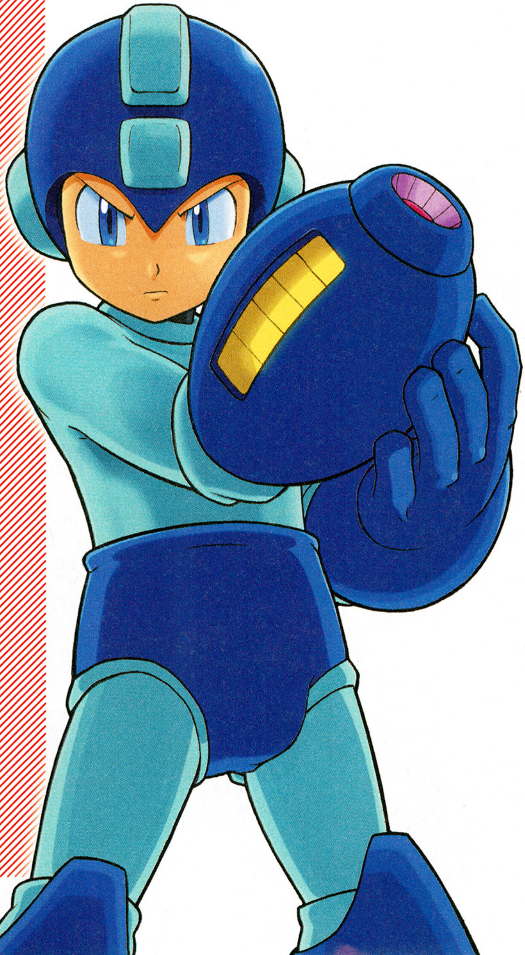
Mega Man: Year Two

Find out what's in store for the Blue Bomber as the *Mega Man* comic book enters its second year of publication.

There's never a dull moment when you're one of video gaming's most recognizable icons. In the first year of Archie Comics's monthly *Mega Man* series, the titular blue hero has survived the action-packed events of the first two Mega Man NES games, saved his "sister" Roll from the clutches of evil Robot Masters, proved his creator's innocence, and thwarted Dr. Wily's ambitions no fewer than three times. Best of all, the adventure has been told through excellent writing, dynamic art, and plots that are true to the source material—overall, it's been a fantastic adaptation of Capcom's fan-favorite franchise. So what's next for Mega Man and company? To find out, we checked in with series scribe (and also the writer of Archie's *Sonic the Hedgehog* comic) Ian Flynn. —CHRIS H.



NINTENDO POWER What sort of lessons did you learn about the Mega Man property during the first year of the comic?

IAN FLYNN I knew it was a huge franchise, but I didn't realize how huge! I had a lot of fun mapping out the stories and their intended (and potential) interconnectivity through the main series, the Game Boy series, and the numerous offshoots, both classic and obscure.

What was your favorite part of that first year of storytelling?

Getting to introduce Rock's transformation into Mega Man. The story of one little boy taking on all the problems in the world is such a moving piece of fiction. All this time it was packaged in eight bits. Who knew (aside from the Mega Man fans, of course)?

How will things be changing as we enter the comic's second year?

We're going to be switching up the way we approach the stories somewhat. We'll be exploring the world of Mega Man a little bit more and giving some focus to other characters from the series.

So far there's been a fairly strong emphasis on Mega Man being conflicted about his powers. Is that going to continue or will we see him coming to grips with himself?

It's something he'll grow into. He'll never truly be at peace with having to destroy his own kind, but as time passes he'll come to understand who he is and what he has to do to protect the greater good.

What sort of adventures should we expect Mega Man to be involved with over the next 12 months?

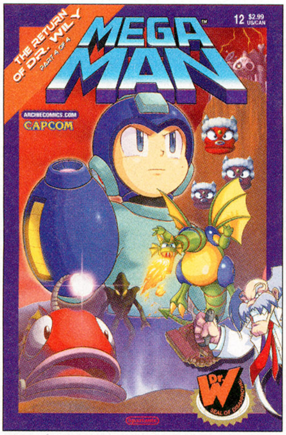
We've got a lot of things cooking behind the scenes, and we're going to start approaching the continuity in a way that's going to surprise some die-hard fans, but will ultimately make for a stronger narrative in the long run. We're going to get a new villainous force to give us a break from Dr. Wily, and we'll start singin' the Blues. Overall, you can expect a Super Mega Man Adventure.

Have you and your editors considered going outside the four-issue-arc format—say, expanding an arc to eight issues when need be? It seems like you have to cram in a lot when you've got eight Robot Masters and a Dr. Wily battle to fit into four issues.

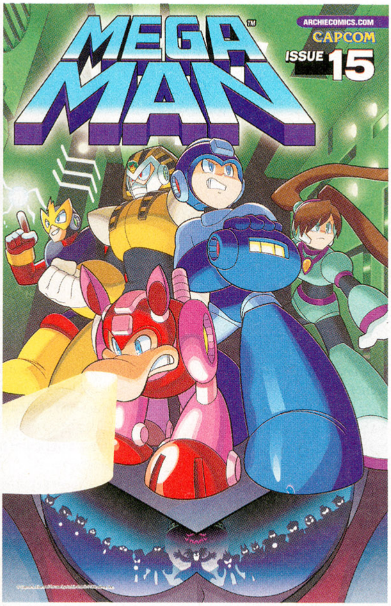
It's something we're definitely aware of and considering. The four-issue format allows us to produce the trade paperbacks at a quick and affordable rate, and we want as many people to be able to enjoy this series as possible. But like you said, four issues and eight Robot Masters (plus a Wily castle) makes for some quick pacing. We'll be messing around with that formula in "Year Two." It's still a very new series, and so it's open to experimentation.

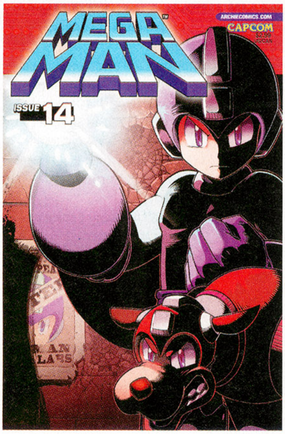
What sort of challenges are you encountering due to adapting games that follow a rather specific formula, and how are you overcoming them?

In the first year it wasn't too terribly hard. The entire year fits under one theme, with certain dangers appearing and evolving into the final confrontation of Mega Man #12. The first arc was a simple enough origin story, the second a bit of a world-building breather, and then the third arc was Dr. Wily's reprisal. It does feel a little same-y at points, but that's helped by the cohesive theme. From here, the scope of the games gets larger and



[Above] The cover to *Mega Man* #12, which concludes the adaptation of Mega Man 2, was inspired by NES-era box art. [Right] Mega Man teams up with Pharaoh Man in issue #15.





we get more freedom to play with that formula.

If you continue to tackle Mega Man's adventures in the order they were released, Mega Man: Dr. Wily's Revenge shouldn't be too far off. What are your plans for an adaptation of that game?
I've got a different approach in mind for the Game Boy games and how they might tie in with Wily Wars and the Stardroids. It's not going to mesh 100 percent perfectly with the established game timeline, but given how light and loose it is at this point, I think most fans will allow us the "artistic license" to give them a different—but loyal—retelling of the game stories.

What's the reason for going into an original arc before jumping into the next game, and what will fans get out of the story?
We want to flesh out Mega Man's world a little bit. Where are all the humans the robots are supposed to serve and protect? Is everyone comfortable with these humanlike, emotive machines? Does Dr. Light hold a monopoly on advanced robot designs? When does Dr. Wily find the time to build his robot army?! By breaking things up with original content, we can explore all these questions without falling into the trap of "Mega Man fights eight robots and Dr. Wily" ad nauseam. That works great for the games, but not so much for a monthly comic book.

What made you choose Pharaoh Man as one of that arc's central characters?
As part of an effort to build up the world around Mega Man, I want to show Dr. Light actively collaborating and working with his contemporaries. We'll be seeing Dr. Cossack in the arc, and who better to accompany him than the coolest of his creations?

What is the difference to you between adapting a game story and doing an original story? Do you prefer one over the other?
With the games, the main questions I have when approaching it are "How does this make sense in a non-video game world?" and "How is this going to be told as a story?" as opposed to a FAQ with pictures. How do we spin "Dr. Wily is back again with more robots" in an interesting, organic way?

With original stories, the main question is "How does this add to the mythos?" People want their Mega Man, and I want them to be just as entertained with the new material as they are with the adapted material. A lot of thought (and anxiety!) goes into making sure the new elements fit into Mega Man's world.

Personally, I like the adaptations a little more. World-building and adding to Mega Man's mythos is fun, but I like the challenge of "making sense" of the games. Snake Man's stage is going to be one such challenge.

Should we expect more original characters and storylines going forward?
Some, yes, but I don't want to go overboard. The new characters will be bringing elements to the series that are currently lacking. Who can challenge him besides Dr. Wily? Where are the humans he's sworn to protect? Why is there only one female Robot Master? Stuff like that.

Speaking of original characters, is Gil Stern's design and color scheme inspired by Bob Copper from Mega Man Star Force?
Ben Bates—brilliant artist that he is—did the designs for Gil off of a basic concept I wrote up. You'd have to ask him what he was thinking. (Personally, I hope you're right, because that would be awesome.)

Proto Man's been teased for a while, and based on the cover to issue #15 we assume he'll finally show up soon. What can you tell us about his debut? And will he be Proto Man or Break Man?
I can't wait for us to get to Proto Man. The story of how he goes from Blues to Proto Man to Break Man is fantastic, and we want to do it properly. I can't spoil anything beyond that!

So, as hardcore Mega Man fans, we have to ask: what was the deal with Mega Man using the Leaf Shield to defeat Bubble Man in issue #9? In the game it harmlessly bounces off of him!
The running gag I picked up on when doing research for the series was Bubble Man was laaaaame. What could be a worse way to go than your nonweakness?

Do you have any plans to show flashbacks of Dr. Wily and Dr. Light working together in their younger days?
I'd really like to do that at some point. Hopefully Capcom will be OK with it. They've given us a ton of creative freedom, but at the end of the day we have to respect

The Story So Far

If you haven't been following the first year of Mega Man's comic-book adventures, fret not. Archie has conveniently compiled the initial 12 issues into three handy volumes for your reading pleasure. *Mega Man Vol. 1: Let the Games Begins* (containing issues #1-4) and *Mega Man Vol. 2: Time Keeps Slipping* (containing issues #5-8) are available now, and *Mega Man Vol. 3: The Return of Dr. Wily* (containing issues #9-12) will be available at the end of August.

"MEGA MAN RETURNS TO COMICS WITH AN EXPLOSIVE NEW SERIES!" NINTENDO POWER MAGAZINE
MEGA MAN
LET THE GAMES BEGIN
FLYNN · SPAZIANTE

"THE BLUE BOMBER IS BACK IN A BIG WAY THANKS TO ARCHIE'S NEW VIDEO GAME COMIC BOOK SERIES!" - IGN
MEGA MAN
TIME KEEPS SLIPPING
FLYNN · THOMAS · MARTIN

"MEGA MAN RETURNS TO COMICS WITH AN EXPLOSIVE NEW SERIES!" NINTENDO POWER MAGAZINE
MEGA MAN
THE RETURN OF DR. WILY
FLYNN · BATES · MARTIN

how they want their properties portrayed. So we'll see!

What's it been like working with Capcom overall? Have you had the freedom to take the story in whatever direction you've wanted?

As I said, they've been very open with how we approach the Mega Man mythos. They're really giving me a lot of room creatively. In return, I've been trying to honor that by staying true to the franchise. It's been working out really well so far.

Are there any upcoming cameos we should be on the lookout for?

Oh, sure, but hunting them down is half the fun. I won't spoil it for you.

Do you have a personal favorite Robot Master?

Guts Man. I never get tired of Guts Man.

You've said that you've sometimes used level theme music to inspire the personality that's given to the Robot Masters. Can you give an example?

When writing the finale to the third arc, I played some of the Wily Castle 2 tracks. It really helped in giving a sense of oppressive urgency while still being upbeat and driving the action.

Are there any characters you're especially looking forward to including?

Proto Man, as I mentioned. I really want to sink my creative claws into Quint and explore his potential. And of course there's Bass, because I'm a sucker for "evil counterpart." You might say writing that type of character is my forte.

Please tell us about your plans for Mega Man's Soccer!

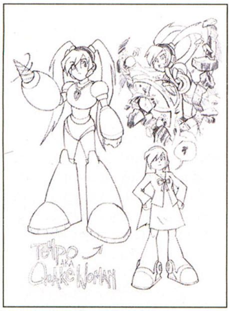
Yes, I've got an idea on how I want to approach Mega Man's Soccer. I don't know when we'll get to it, but it'll happen.

Finally, we know that there have been lots of requests, so are you ready to commit to a Mega Man X comic yet?

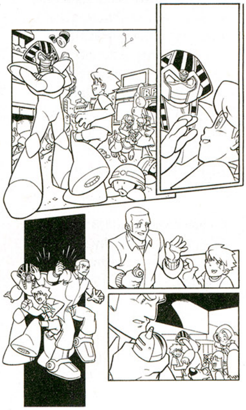
If folks want to see it happen, they need to write in to Archie Comics and Capcom and tell them how much they want it. Show your support, and who knows what might happen?

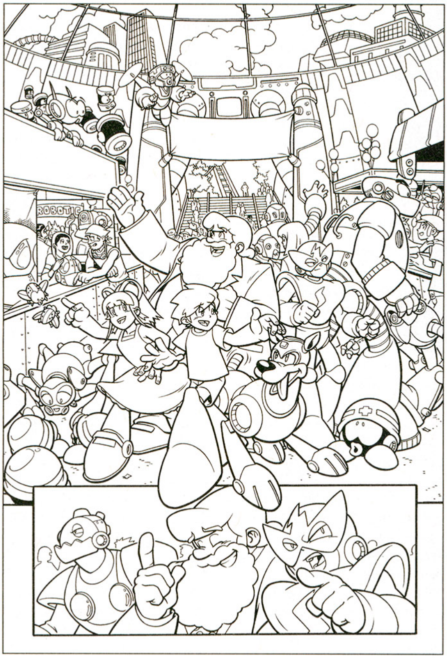
Bonus Question: Which Mega Man X boss name is worse: Duff McWhalen or Metal Shark Player?

Duff McWhalen is brilliant and I shall hear nothing to the contrary. (Granted, Tidal Makkoeen is cooler.) Metal Shark Player...his design is kinda nifty at least, right?


TEMPO AKA QUAKE WOMAN

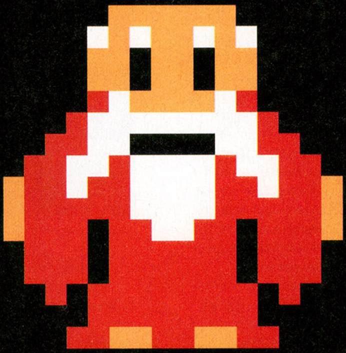
[Above] Design sketches of an all-new character. [Below and right] Uncolored pages from issue #13.





"IT'S DANGEROUS TO GO ALONE! TAKE THIS."

—OLD MAN, THE LEGEND OF ZELDA, 1987



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Future
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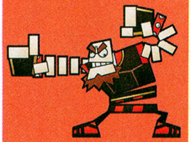
POWER QUIZ

EASY

In Super Smash Bros. Brawl, what does Wario unleash during his Wario Waft attack?

AVERAGE

What does the villain O'Chunks use to fly in Super Paper Mario?



HARDCORE

In the Virtual Console game J.J. & Jeff, the protagonists may attack with a spray can. What was the original form of this move in the Japanese version of the game?

ANSWERS

EASY: a fart; AVERAGE: a fart; HARDCORE: a fart

Direct from Kyoto

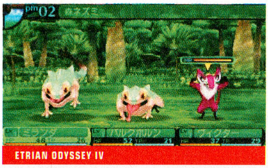
NEWS *from* JAPAN

Japan's latest Nintendo Direct broadcast was packed with big news for Japanese DS, N3DS, and Wii owners.

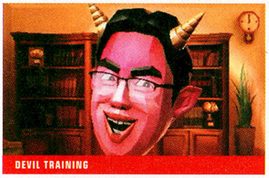
WHILE THERE were plenty of announcements in Nintendo of America's late-February Nintendo Direct broadcast, the program couldn't come close to matching the length and breadth of the nearly hour-long version prepared for Nintendo's Japanese audience.

For the Nintendo DS, company president Satoru Iwata gave a closer look at Pokémon + Nobunaga's Ambition, the outlandish crossover that adds Pokémon to Tecmo Koei's long-running series of simulation games. The Nobunaga's Ambition franchise is based on Japan's 16th-century wars of unification, but since this entry is straying just a wee bit from actual history, it's instead set in the Japanlike fantasy world of Rance, which feuding warlords scheme to conquer. The strategy elements have been simplified a bit for casual audiences, and the combat now takes place on an isometric battlefield where teams of Pokémon are commanded by historical samurai warlords. It's just off-the-wall enough to sound completely awesome.

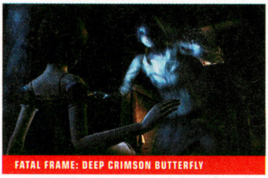
For Wii, Iwata finally lifted the veil on an untitled Fatal Frame game that was promised over a year ago—Fatal Frame: Deep Crimson Butterfly, a remake of 2003's Fatal Frame: Crimson Butterfly for the PlayStation2 and Xbox. The Wii version of the cult-hit horror title has upgraded graphics and features a new two-player mode.



ETRIAN ODYSSEY IV



DEVIL TRAINING



FATAL FRAME: DEEP CRIMSON BUTTERFLY

There was plenty of news for Nintendo 3DS owners, as well, including closer looks at Nintendo's Fire Emblem: Awakening, Marvelous's Rune Factory IV, and Square Enix's Dragon Quest Monsters: Terry's Wonderland 3D. But there were also several new title announcements, including Etrian Odyssey IV, the follow-up to Atlus's trilogy of hardcore Nintendo DS dungeon-crawlers. But this installment needn't be quite so challenging as its predecessors; it includes a casual mode that tones down the series's legendary difficulty. Other features include 3D-modeled enemies and a new version of the sea-exploration minigame from Etrian Odyssey III, this time featuring a hot-air balloon.

Iwata also teased a new N3DS collaboration between Capcom, Sega, and Namco Bandai; no details of the game were revealed, but there was a cryptic promise that you'll never be able to guess what it is—so why bother trying?

Iwata wasn't so vague when it came to discussing a new N3DS entry in the company's famous Brain Age: Train Your Brain in Minutes a Day! series. The new title will focus on concentration and memory, aspects that apparently require a much tougher training regimen than those in the previous Brain Age games. Accordingly, series host Dr. Kawashima was shown with devil horns, and the game is code-named "Devil Training." The official title will be announced in advance of the game's summer release. **—CASEY L.**

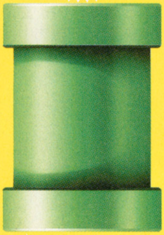
PHOENIX ON FILM

If you're a Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney fan, then you've probably already heard about the live-action interpretation of the popular Nintendo DS series that recently hit movie theaters across Japan. Those of us on the other side of the Pacific will have a chance to see the film when it comes to North America this summer. Based on the events of the first Ace Attorney game, the movie stars Hiroki Narimiya as Phoenix Wright, Takumi Saitoh as his rival Miles Edgeworth, and Mirei Kiritani as Phoenix's client/assistant Maya Fey. The subtitled film will be screened exclusively at the Anime, Manga, and Music (AM2) convention held June 15–17 in Anaheim, California. **—CHRIS H.**

WARP ZONE

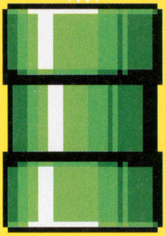
What we were writing about way back when

5 YEARS AGO

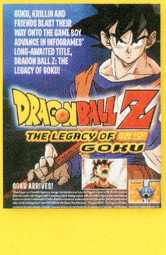


In April 2007 Nintendo Power provided an exclusive first look at the Wii version of Super Paper Mario. Originally conceived as a GameCube game, this unique platforming/RPG hybrid enabled players to switch the perspective from 2D to 3D at the press of a button. Mario was not the cover star, however; that honor went to the supercute characters of MySims, marking the debut of the popular Sims series on Wii. Pokémon Pearl and Pokémon Diamond Versions were featured, as well.

10 YEARS AGO



Ten years ago the Dragon Ball Z phenomenon was out of control. Just about every other letter to Nintendo Power was from a rabid, wild-eyed fan who was willing to do anything to get his hands on a new DBZ game. Infogrames satisfied those demands with the release of Dragon Ball Z: The Legacy of Goku, an action-RPG for Game Boy Advance. But the spiky-haired fighter wasn't the only one making a splash; the world's most famous secret agent made his GameCube debut with James Bond 007 in Agent Under Fire.



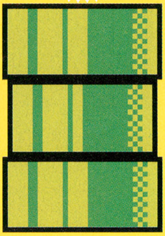
GOKU, KRILLIN AND FRIENDS BLAST THEIR WAY ONTO THE GAME BOY ADVANCE IN INFOGRAMES' LONG-AWAITED TITLE, DRAGON BALL Z: THE LEGACY OF GOKU!

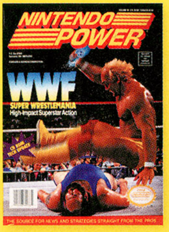
DRAGON BALL Z

THE LEGACY OF GOKU

GOKU ARRIVES!

20 YEARS AGO




NINTENDO POWER
WWF
SUPER WRESTLEMANIA
High-Impact Superstar Action
CD ROM TECH UPDATE
THE SOURCE FOR NEWS AND STRATEGIES STRAIGHT FROM THE PROS

Hulkamania was running wild on the cover of the April 1992 issue of Nintendo Power, brother, when Hulk Hogan, the Undertaker, and other wrestling superstars exploded onto the Super NES in WWF Super WrestleMania. Most of the other games featured in the issue were pretty forgettable (aside from Super Smash TV), but a spread on the ill-fated Super NES CD-ROM add-on was rather illuminating. Considering all the talk of "full-motion video" in the article, maybe it's for the best that the peripheral was axed.

ULTIMATE CARD GAMES
NINTENDO DS
Nintendo Wi-Fi connection
11 Classic Games
Hearts • Spades
Euchre • Canasta
Bridge • more
20 Solitaire Games
FreeCell • Klondike
Golf • Yukon • Spider
Pyramid • many more
13 Casino Games
Texas Hold'em • Double Flop Hold'em
5 Card Draw • 7 Card Stud • Blackjack
Crazy Pineapple • 5 Video Poker • more
NEW
TEEN T
Online Interactions Not Rated by the ESRB
Challenge Everyone, Anywhere.
TELEGAMES
SOLITAIRE OVERLOAD PLUS
101 Mahjong
202 Solitaire
303 Tangram
101 Picture Puzzles
EVERYONE E
ALMOST UNLIMITED PLAY!
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6 x 6 Grids
4 x 4 Grids
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STAR POWER

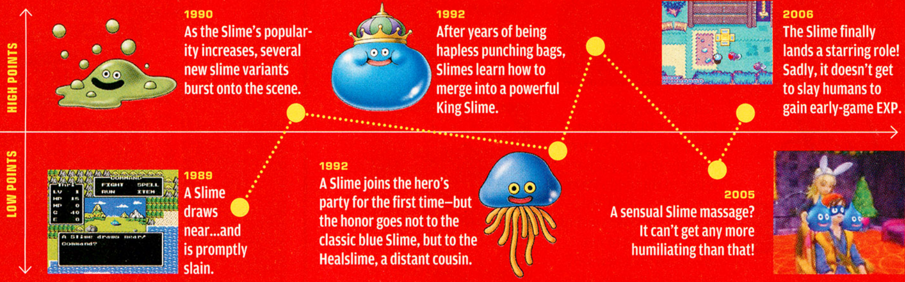
A closer look at the characters we love

Slime

FIRST APPEARANCE:
DRAGON WARRIOR
NES, 1989

The world might be a much better place if all baddies were as cute as Dragon Quest's gooey blue mascot.

CAREER GRAPH



A Slime draws near!
Command?

1990
As the Slime's popularity increases, several new slime variants burst onto the scene.

1992
After years of being hapless punching bags, Slimes learn how to merge into a powerful King Slime.

2006
The Slime finally lands a starring role! Sadly, it doesn't get to slay humans to gain early-game EXP.

1989
A Slime draws near...and is promptly slain.

1992
A Slime joins the hero's party for the first time—but the honor goes not to the classic blue Slime, but to the Healslime, a distant cousin.

2005
A sensual Slime massage? It can't get any more humiliating than that!

OUR FAVORITE SLIME GAMES

Five Slimes appear!

Dragon Warrior III

NES, 1991

There's something sort of charming about the simplicity and clumsiness of the first two Dragon Warrior games, but DWIII stands as the first entry in the series that's still enjoyable by modern standards. It's also available on Game Boy Color.

Dragon Quest Heroes: Rocket Slime

NINTENDO DS, 2006

The classic blue Slime starred in a series of three games, but only the second was ever released in the West. The core game is an action-RPG that plays similarly to the Legend of Zelda series, but Rocket Slime also features deeply strategic tank-vs.-tank battles.

Fight
Party
Tactics
Flee

Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride

NINTENDO DS, 2009

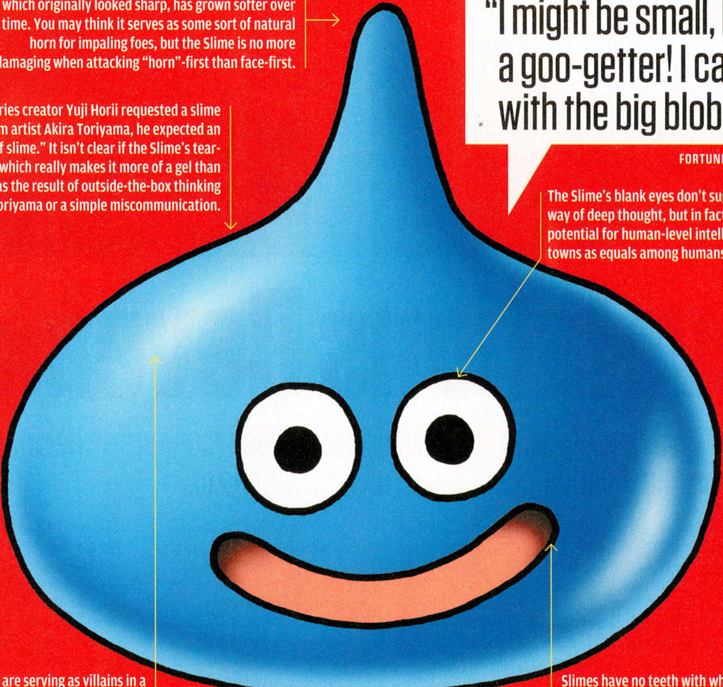
North American audiences never got to play DQV until this Nintendo DS remake, but it's still a fantastic game with the best story in the series. Many of DQV's monsters can be recruited to serve as party members, including seven varieties of Slime!

A slime draws near!

Dragon Quest IX: Sentinels of the Starry Skies

NINTENDO DS, 2010

Dragon Quest IX revolutionized the series with online play, and shook up the Slime family tree with the addition of Slime Stacks, Darkonium Slimes, and Shogums. Even the classic blue Slimes are much cuter—and more pathetic—as polygons.



The design of the Slime hasn't changed much over the last 20-plus years, but the hornlike tip of its head, which originally looked sharp, has grown softer over time. You may think it serves as some sort of natural horn for impaling foes, but the Slime is no more damaging when attacking "horn"-first than face-first.

When series creator Yuji Horii requested a slime design from artist Akira Toriyama, he expected an "icky pool of slime." It isn't clear if the Slime's teardrop shape—which really makes it more of a gel than a slime—was the result of outside-the-box thinking from Toriyama or a simple miscommunication.

> "I might be small, but I'm a goo-getter! I can play with the big blobs!"
>
> FORTUNE STREET, Wii, 2011

The Slime's blank eyes don't suggest much in the way of deep thought, but in fact all Slimes have the potential for human-level intelligence. Some live in towns as equals among humans.

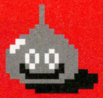
When Slimes are serving as villains in a game, the light generally hits them in such a way as to reflect off of one side of their foreheads and one side of their undercarriages. But when Slimes are in heroic roles, the highlights often appear on either side of their mouths to create an adorable set of dimples.

Despite their name, Slimes have surprisingly rigid bodies. As anyone who has encountered a Slime Knight can attest, they are strong enough to support the weight of a miniature knight in full plate armor.

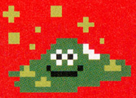
Slimes have no teeth with which to bite, leaving them with little in the way of offensive abilities. They do possess tongues that are flexible enough for English speech, although most Slimes are afflicted with a highly improbable speech impediment that makes them say things like "slime" and "goo" in place of similar-sounding words.

THE FAMILY SLIMUS DRAQUESTUS

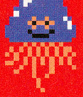
The basic teardrop slime was the Kim Kardashian of its day; after it hit the big time, distant relatives began pouring out of the woodwork to bask in reflected glory. A few of the most famous:



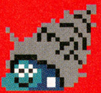
Metal Slime (circa DWI) The Metal Slime is the ultimate troll, teasing players by coupling high-experience payouts with through-the-roof defense scores and a habit of running away.



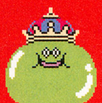
Bubble Slime (circa DWII) These poisonous green Slimes are little more than toxic puddles with happy faces. At least they actually do look slimy.



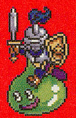
Healslime (circa DWII) The jellyfish version of the classic Slime typically has no offensive capabilities, but provides constant healing to other battlefield monsters.



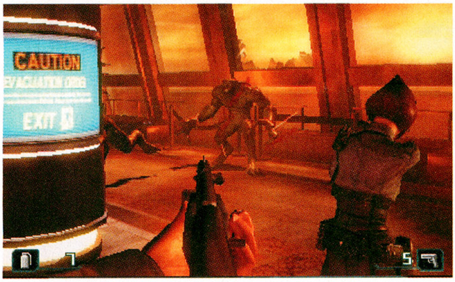
Seaslime (circa DWIII) This shelled Slime usually appears in coastal areas. It seems to have fallen out of favor, failing to appear in most recent installments of the series.



King Slime (circa DWIV) Giant, crowned King Slimes sometimes appear in their premade state, but are usually born midbattle when eight normal Slimes merge.



Slime Knight (circa DQV) Masked knights riding Slimes into combat. Their goals of defending innocent Slimes are noble, but they're clearly doing a terrible job of it.



Revelations Revealed

Producer Masachika Kawata shares his post-release thoughts on Resident Evil: Revelations and the triumphant return of survival-horror.

Few handheld games are as impressively ambitious as Resident Evil: Revelations, which offers all the bells, whistles, and eye-popping production values of its console counterparts. It's also one of the best reasons to own a Nintendo 3DS. To learn more about what went into the M-rated title's development, we caught up with producer Masachika Kawata. —STEVE T.

NINTENDO POWER For the first time in the series, Revelations has an episodic structure reminiscent of a television series. What was the impetus for that?

MASACHIKA KAWATA I think it was Resident Evil 5 producer Jun Takeuchi who came up with the idea when we discussed before development started what we could do to make Revelations unique.

There are four playable characters in the game, but players spend the most time with Jill. Was there any particular reason you wanted to make her the main star?

Chris and Jill were always going to be a key part of the story due to it being set at the time the BSAA [Bioterrorism Security Assessment Alliance] was founded. They're part of the "original 11," a name given to members present from the founding of the organization. Unlike Chris, Jill had not been used as a main character in recent Resident Evil titles, so it seemed good to focus on her. Using Jill also dovetailed with our intention to bring the series back to its horror roots, as I think female characters are particularly well suited to horror titles. Audiences (both male and female) seem to project more vulnerability onto female characters than male characters in horror situations, as seen in any number of horror movies.

Did you always intend to set the game between Resident Evil 4 and Resident Evil 5 or did the team explore other possibilities in the timeline? And ultimately, why did you choose to set Revelations between those two installments?

The first thing we decided about the story for Revelations was that it would be about how the BSAA got started. This meant the time setting was already determined for us, as during the development of RE5 we'd already laid out the details and decided that the BSAA was founded between the events of RE4 and RE5. Since the BSAA was first introduced in RE5, users don't know as much about it as other organizations in the series, so it was very appealing to go into more detail about it with Revelations.

What made you go with Il Veltro as the game's villain rather than Umbrella, Tricell, or some other previously established antagonist?

At this point in the timeline, Umbrella is already gone, and if Tricell were behind it all there would be inconsistencies with the RE5 story, so neither of these past enemies would have worked within the framework of the Revelations story. Ultimately, since we had [famed anime screenwriter] Dai Saito penning the story for us, we didn't want to impose a lot of story and setting restrictions that might water down his style. Using a new villain was the best way to let him write with the freedom he needed.

An abandoned cruise ship proves a highly effective setting for creating a sense of unease in the player. Where did that idea come from?

When you need to set your game in a dark, damp, enclosed space with no way out, there aren't really a great many options. The ship setting also allowed us to have free-movement swimming sections that show off the 3D really well.

Speaking of which, Revelations has some of the best stereoscopic 3D we've seen on the Nintendo 3DS. What's the secret to implementing effective 3D on the handheld?
Revelations uses the 3D as more of an into-the-screen effect rather than having things popping out all the time. This gives players a visceral sense of being trapped in an enclosed space. A lot of the fear in Resident Evil games comes from exploring an environment where you don't know what lurks around the next corner, so our goal was to make players feel that the corner was really there, looming in front of them and almost daring them to come closer.

We also took great care to vary creature color and lighting in order to enhance the 3D effect, like when white Oozes come lurching out of the darkness toward you.

We really like what the Genesis Bio-Scanner brings to the game. How did that idea come about?
Genesis was originally going to be limited to the beginning of the game, but we decided to expand its use to the whole game. As a survival-horror title, ammo and herbs are hard to come by in Revelations. Having access to Genesis throughout the game keeps the game from becoming too difficult, and I think scanning for items adds something to the gameplay and the horror atmosphere.

An AI partner accompanies the player throughout almost the entire game. Why not include a two-player co-op option for the main story mode?
In the course of designing Revelations, we asked ourselves what horror really is. We came to the conclusion that it's all about tension and release. Some might say that having a partner lessens the tension because it's not as frightening as being alone, but we wanted partner sections to provide a baseline so that you really would be frightened when you get split up and have to go it alone. Then when you find your partner again, you relax and the tension is eased, so if we hit you with a surprise enemy attack the tension goes through the roof again. Hence you get separated as the story progresses, and if the game were two-player then we wouldn't be able to control when you were alone and when you weren't. This is why we didn't include co-op and instead developed the game as a single-player experience.

Jill's sections are reminiscent of the franchise's survival-horror roots, while the other sections tend to be more action-heavy, à la Resident Evil 5. What do you think that mix brings to the game, and was it something you pursued intentionally from the beginning?
One of the concepts for the game was to make it like a serialized TV drama. This led us to create an ensemble piece of the kind that hadn't been seen in the RE series, so the game has a variety of characters who are each in a different kind of situation. Some sections, such as Keith and Quint's, may seem out of place in a horror game at first glance. But going back to the theme of tension and release I mentioned earlier, switching to Keith and Quint provides a release so that the tension is heightened when you return to playing as Jill. Action-heavy sections also provide release from the tension of having very little ammo and barely making it through fights with enemies. I think having this balance between elements makes the game more satisfying for the player.

This is the first time we've seen a brand-new, full-fledged Resident Evil title for a handheld. How did the development experience differ from making an RE console game?
Hardware differences are a fact of game development, and I don't just mean between home consoles and handhelds. While we wanted to take full advantage of the great features of the Nintendo 3DS, we didn't treat Revelations as "just" a handheld game, or use the fact that it was on a handheld platform as a justification for allowing it to be lower quality than any other RE game. I think the high praise we've received from users and the press shows that we succeeded in this.

In the US, Revelations is the first game to take advantage of the Circle Pad Pro. What was your reaction when you first heard about that accessory, and how deep into Revelations's development were you at the time? And do most members of the development team prefer to play with or without it?
My first impression of the accessory was that it expands the possibilities of the Nintendo 3DS. I also thought that by providing something larger to grip, it might be popular in the West.

We fine-tuned Revelations so that it could be enjoyed without the Circle Pad Pro, but we also supported the accessory in order to appeal to a broader user base, in particular players who enjoy a lot of first-person shooters. A lot of our staff members use the Pro, but those who are used to classic Resident Evil controls tend to play without it. I think this is also true of a lot of Japanese fans, so perhaps that's just a difference between Japan and the West.

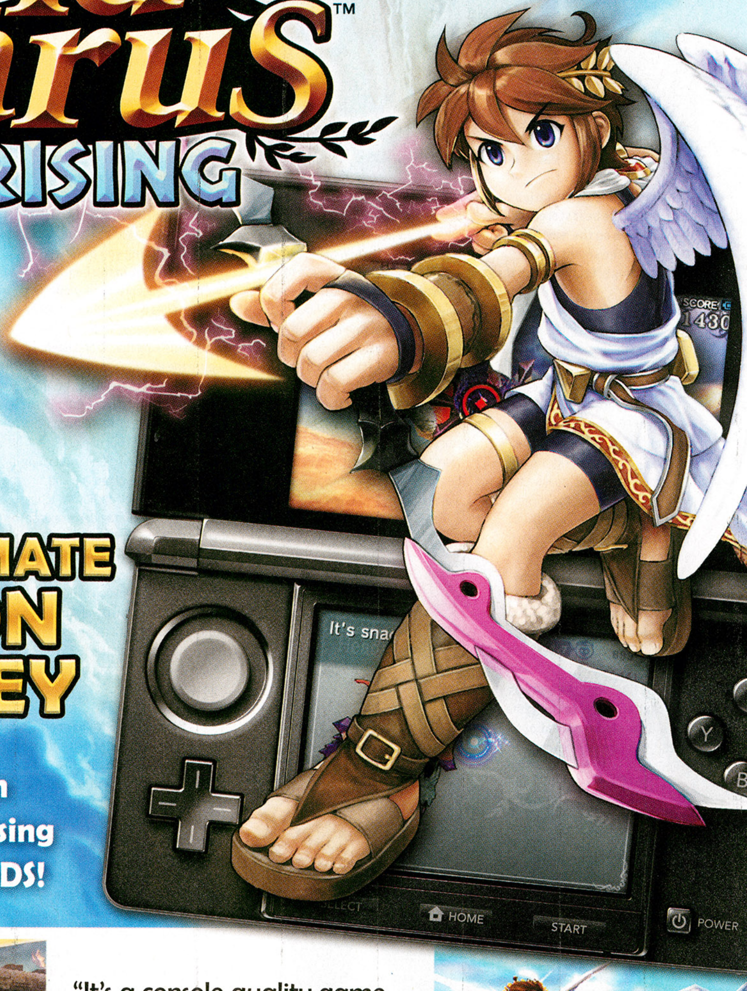
What's your favorite stage to play in Raid mode and why?
The Ghost Ship, because it lets you explore the *Queen Zenobia* in its entirety. You get to feel like you're Chris or Jill, wandering around the abandoned ship.

Do you have any expert tips for our readers regarding Raid mode?
You can reload in an instant by using a grenade explosion to cancel the lengthy reload animation. First, drop a grenade at your feet, and then start reloading before it explodes. When the grenade explodes, the reload animation will stop and you'll grab your weapon in both hands, but the reloading will have been performed anyway. You can use this trick in the main game as well, but it's more useful in Raid mode, where you can buy grenades at the shop. The same thing goes for dodging while reloading.

Also, this is a little microtrick, but the bullets in your gun are replenished between stages. So once you've killed all the enemies in a stage, don't bother reloading, as your current clip will be full anyway when the next stage starts. This can help you save a little bit of ammo at the end of every stage.

Have you given any thought to creating DLC for Revelations? If we can make a request, we'd love to see Barry Burton in Raid mode.
I'm aware of how popular Barry is in the US, so he's definitely a possibility if we do create any DLC for the game.

Kid Icarus™ UPRISING



SCORE
1430
It's snac
SELECT
HOME
START
POWER
Y
B

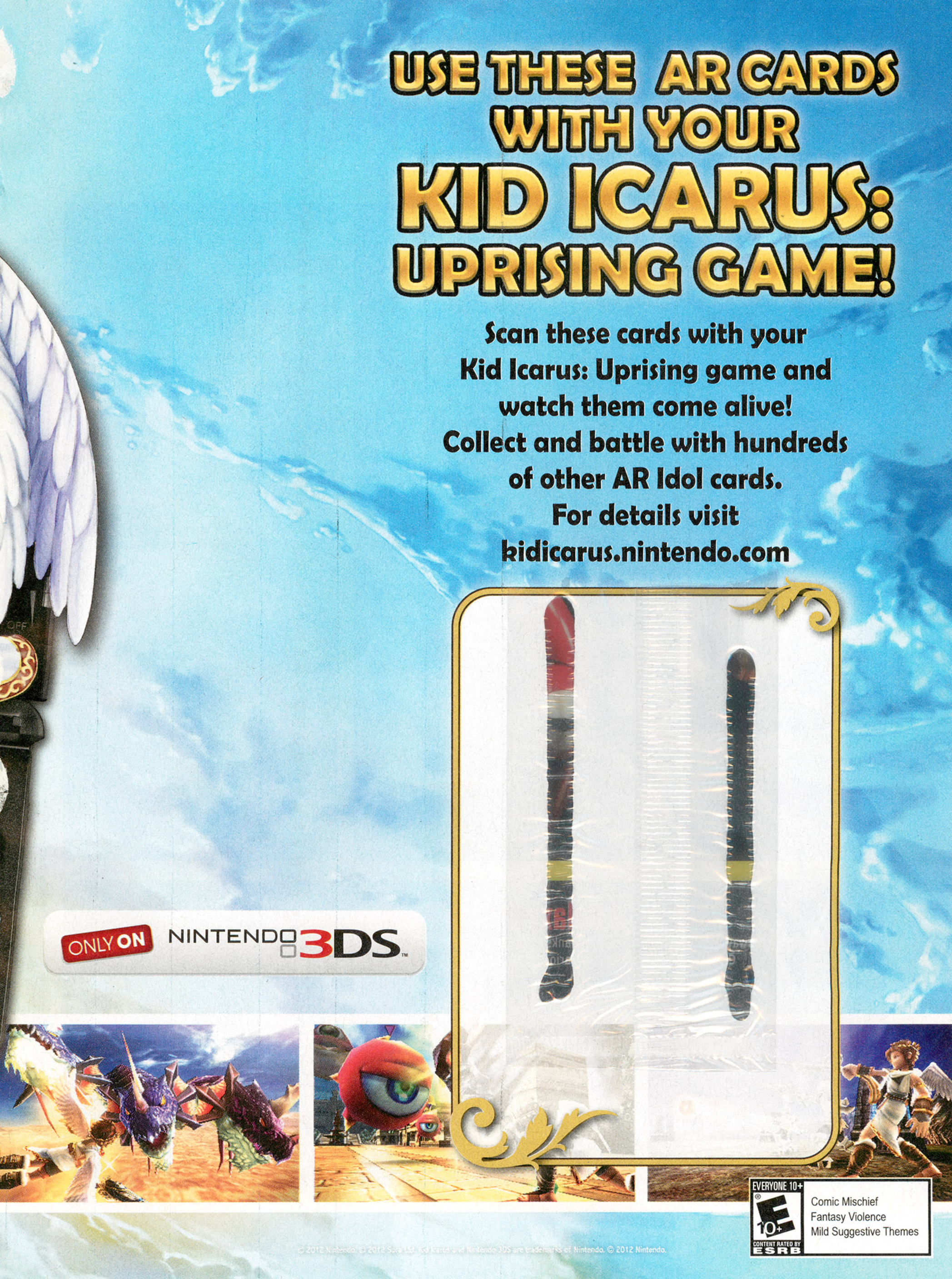
THE ULTIMATE ACTION ODYSSEY

Pit returns in Kid Icarus: Uprising for Nintendo 3DS!

> "It's a console quality game on a handheld device, and it offers a ton of replay value."
> – Destructoid

Nintendo

Use Parental Controls to restrict 3D mode for children 6 and under.



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Mild Suggestive Themes

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COLLECTOR'S CORNER

SERIOUSLY COOL STUFF FOR SERIOUS NINTENDO FANS

X Marks the Spot

The Mega Man X D-Arts action figures of X (full-armor version) and Zero are designed for hardcore Mega Man fanatics. Made by Bandai and distributed by Blue Fin in North America, these figures are extremely articulated and include multiple hands and faceplates. Each figure costs approximately $40.

He Is the Eggman

Sonic's 20th anniversary may be over, but you can continue to celebrate with these action figures based on Sonic's nemesis, Dr. Robotnik (aka Dr. Eggman). Choose from classic Dr. Eggman (with two Eggrobos) or modern Dr. Eggman (with two Egg Fighters).

A Galaxy in Your Pocket

You'll always know where your keys are thanks to the Super Mario Galaxy 2 keychain collection from Banpresto and Global Holdings. Choose from Mario, Boo Mushroom, Bee Luigi, Bee Mushroom, and Bee Mario.

GAME FORECAST

NINTENDO 3DS

The Amazing Spider-Man	Activision	6/12
Angler's Club: Ultimate Bass Fishing 3D	D3	2012
Animal Crossing*	Nintendo	TBA
Battleship	Activision	5/12
BloodRayne: The Shroud	Majesco	TBA
Boulder Dash XL 3D	Giant	TBA
A Boy and His Blob	Majesco	TBA
Carnival Games Wild West 3D	Take-Two	TBA
Chevy Camaro: Wild Ride	Storm City	TBA
Chocobo Racing 3D*	Square Enix	TBA
Contra*	Konami	TBA
Crash-City GP	Rocket	TBA
de Blob 2	THQ	TBA
Dragon Ball*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Dragon Quest*	Square Enix	TBA
Dynasty Warriors*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Disney Epic Mickey: Power of Illusion	Disney	FALL 12
Etrian Odyssey*	Atlus	TBA
Final Fantasy*	Square Enix	TBA
Fractured Soul: Deep Void	Ignition	SUM 12
Gundam*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Heroes of Ruin	Square Enix	SPR 12
Kingdom Hearts 3D: Dream Drop Distance	Square Enix	2012
LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes	Warner Bros.	SUM 12
LEGO City Stories	Nintendo	2012
Lion's Pride: Adventures in the Serengeti	Majesco	TBA
Lovely Lisa 3D	Tomy	TBA
Luigi's Mansion 2	Nintendo	2012
Mahjong 3D: Warriors of the Emperor	Giant	TBA
Mario Tennis Open	Nintendo	5/12
Martha Stewart	Majesco	TBA
Men in Black	Activision	5/12
Monster 4x4 3DS	Ubisoft	TBA
Naruto Shippuden Action*	Tomy	TBA
Ninja Gaiden*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Paper Mario*	Nintendo	TBA
Planet Crashers	Ignition	SUM 12
Professor Layton and the Mask of Miracle*	Level-5	TBA
Puzzler World 3DS	Ubisoft	TBA
Raving Rabbids 5*	Ubisoft	TBA
Rhythm Thief & the Emperor's Treasure	Sega	5/12
RollerCoaster Tycoon 3D	Atari	5/12
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona*	Atlus	TBA
Sudoku Premier Edition	Majesco	TBA
Super Robot*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA
Transformers: Prime—The Game	Activision	FALL 12
Virtue's Last Reward	Aksys	2012
VS-robo	Rocket	TBA
WonderWorld Amusement Park	Majesco	TBA

Wii

The Amazing Spider-Man	Activision	6/12
Battleship	Activision	5/12
Disney Epic Mickey: The Power of Two	Disney	FALL 12
Karaoke Joysound	Konami	2012
The Last Story	Xseed	SUM 12
LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes	Warner Bros.	SUM 12
Men in Black	Activision	5/12
Skylanders: Giants	Activision	FALL 12
Transformers: Prime—The Game	Activision	FALL 12
Young Justice: Legacy	Little Orbit	2013

Wii U

Aliens: Colonial Marines	Sega	TBA
Assassin's Creed III	Ubisoft	TBA
Batman: Arkham City	Warner Bros.	TBA
Darksiders II	THQ	TBA
Killer Freaks from Outer Space	Ubisoft	TBA
LEGO City Stories	Nintendo	TBA
Metro: Last Light	THQ	TBA
Ninja Gaiden III: Razor's Edge	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Pikmin*	Nintendo	TBA
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA
Tekken*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Online	Ubisoft	TBA

NINTENDO DS

The Amazing Spider-Man	Activision	6/12
Battleship	Activision	5/12
LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes	Warner Bros.	SUM 12
Men in Black	Activision	5/12
Pokémon Black Version 2	Nintendo	FALL 12
Pokémon White Version 2	Nintendo	FALL 12
Sesame Street: Elmo's Musical Monsterpiece	Warner Bros.	TBA
Transformers: Prime—The Game	Activision	FALL 12
Young Justice: Legacy	Little Orbit	2013

READERS' MOST WANTED

Vote for your favorites at www.nintendopower.com/polls

NINTENDO 3DS

1. Paper Mario*
2. Luigi's Mansion 2
3. Kingdom Hearts 3D: Dream Drop Distance
4. Animal Crossing*
5. Final Fantasy*

Wii

1. The Last Story
2. Skylanders: Giants
3. LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes
4. The Amazing Spider-Man
5. Men in Black

Wii U

1. Batman: Arkham City
2. Ninja Gaiden III: Razor's Edge
3. Tekken*
4. Darksiders II
5. LEGO City Stories

RED TEXT = GAMES ADDED THIS MONTH. * TENTATIVE TITLE **NOTE:** RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE. ALL NINTENDO 3DS SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

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Unchained Blades

VIRTUAL CONSOLE PREVIEW
Wario Land: Super Mario Land 3

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BOX PUSHER
FLIPPER 2: FLUSH THE GOLDFISH
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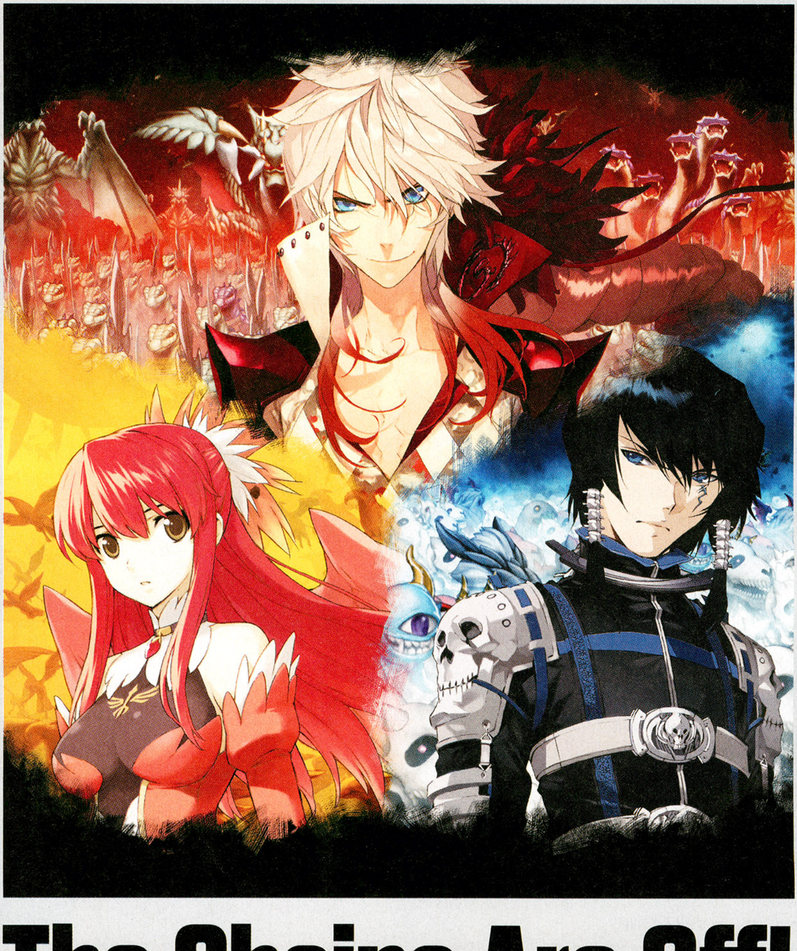
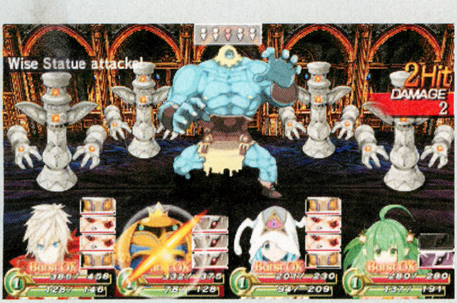
NEWTON VS. THE HORDE

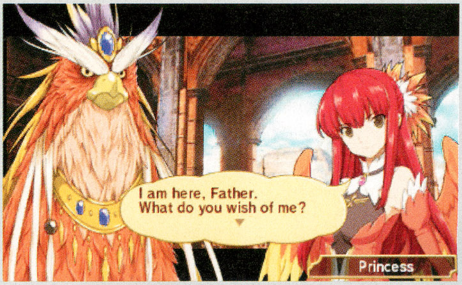
Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE REVIEWS
STRIDER

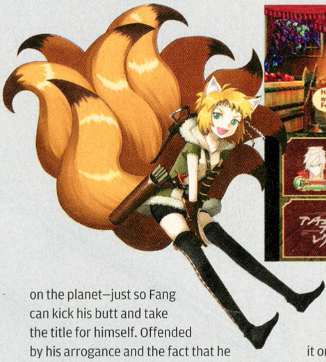


The Chains Are Off!

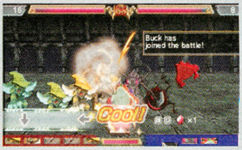
Japanese RPG Unchained Blades is slated to come to North America via the Nintendo eShop.


Wise Statue attacks!


I am here, Father.
What do you wish of me?



Have a care out there. I would hate to see you die. Fewer customers, you see.
Ama
アンチェイン ブレイズ レクス
アンチェイン ブレイズ レクス


Buck has joined the battle!

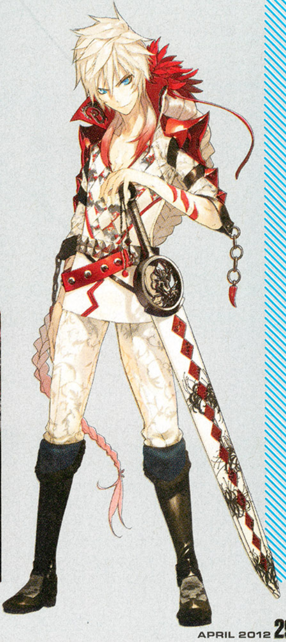
[Above] Judgment Battles feature a rhythm-game-inspired interface.

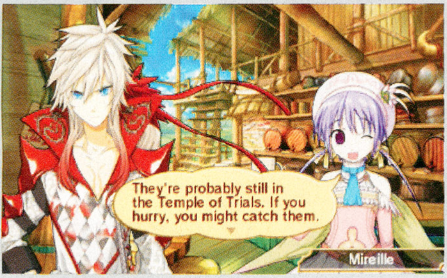
FOR FANS OF Japanese RPGs, Unchained Blades seems to have it all. Not only does it boast all of the staples of the role-playing genre (including anime-style character designs, turn-based battles, expansive dungeons, and deep customization options), but the game is a collaboration of epic proportions, featuring talents that have been involved with series such as Final Fantasy, Lunar, Xenoblade Chronicles, and more. For a time it looked like this dungeon-crawling adventure for the Nintendo 3DS system might not make it to North America (it was released as a retail product last summer in Japan, where it went by the name of UnchainBlades ReXX), but luckily Xseed Games has plans to release the title in downloadable form through the Nintendo eShop.

Set in a fantasy world populated by monsters and creatures of legend, Unchained Blades begins with you in control of Fang, emperor of the dragons and the self-proclaimed most powerful being in the world. Fang, accompanied by a handful of underlings, enters the holy Temple of the Skies, barges in on the mysterious and omnipotent Goddess Clunea, and demands that she tell him the name of the strongest person on the planet—just so Fang can kick his butt and take the title for himself. Offended by his arrogance and the fact that he doesn't want to have a wish granted (which is why most creatures seek an audience with the goddess), Clunea strips Fang of his strength, transforms him into his preadult humanlike form, and hurls him to the planet's surface far below.

Despite being a pompous jerk—and make no mistake, he is one—Fang just might be as tough as he says he is, at least from a mental standpoint. Once he comes to grips with his situation, he decides that he's going to find a way back to Clunea, force her to grant his wish of having his dragon form restored, and then defeat her in battle as retribution for messing with him. Of course, doing so won't be easy, and Fang quickly learns that—like it or not—he's gonna need some assistance. Before long you'll meet up with other characters who also desire to visit the goddess, including Tiana (a phoenix princess who yearns to put her old life behind her), Hector (an adult golem prince who's afraid of getting married), Lapis (a white mage from the medusa clan), Mari (a young Mandrake girl), Niko (a ditzy girl from the Spirit Fox clan), and Lucious and Sylvie (siblings from the Reaper clan who specialize in swordplay and black magic, respectively). Each character has particular strengths and powers, and you'll be able to customize them by spending Skill Points (which you earn when you level up) to unlock stat boosts and new abilities.

But that's barely scratching the game's surface. In addition to teaming up with those playable characters—known as Masters—you'll amass followers to aid you. After you've weakened an enemy in battle, you'll be able to "unchain" it with




They're probably still in the Temple of Trials. If you hurry, you might catch them.

The Chain Gang

Unchained Blades's greatest claim to fame might be the number of famous creators who are contributing to the project. Here's who some of them are and why you should care.

Pako (character designer for Fang): Pako is known for his work on Sega's long-running Shining game series.

Suu Minazuki (character designer for Lapis): He's the writer and illustrator of the fantasy/comedy manga *Heaven's Lost Property*.

Eichi Shimizu & Tomohiro Shimoguchi (character designers for Lucious): This duo is responsible for the manga *Linebarrels of Iron*.

Kumichi Yoshizuki (character designer for Sylvie): Yoshizuki is the artist for the manga *Someday's Dreamers*, which has also been adapted into an anime.

Shinichiro Otsuka (character designer for Hector): Fans of the Summon Night RPG series should be familiar with Otsuka's designs.

Sunaho Tobe (character designer for Mari): Tobe previously worked on Atlus's PSP title Hexyz Force.

Toshiyuki Kubooka (character designer for Niko): Kubooka's work can be seen in the Lunar RPGs, as well as hit Japanese game series Id@lmaster and the classic anime *Giant Robo*.

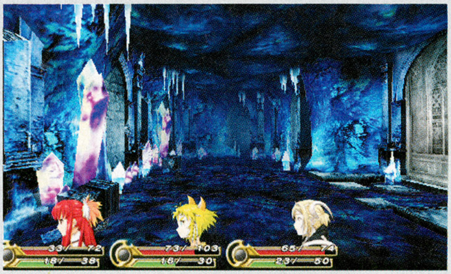
Kazushi Hagiwara (character designer for Clunea): Hagiwara is the creator of the long-running fantasy manga *Bastard!!*

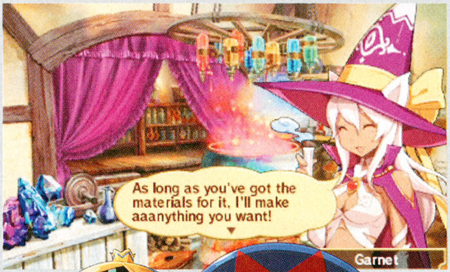
Nobuo Uematsu (main theme composer): This is the guy who composed the bulk of the music for the Final Fantasy series. 'Nuff said!

Tsutomu Narita (composer): One of Narita's most recent works is the soundtrack to Wii RPG Xenoblade Chronicles.

Takashi Hino (scenario writer): Hino was previously a writer for Game Arts's classic Lunar and Grandia games.

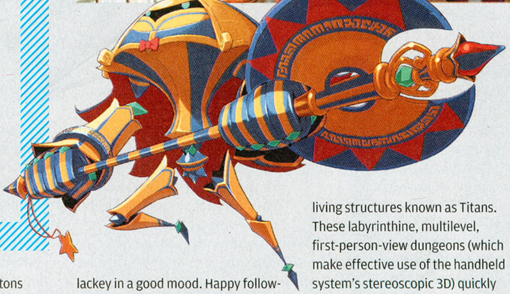
Toshio Akashi (event designer): Like Hino, he helped write Lunar and Grandia.





As long as you've got the materials for it. I'll make aaanything you want!

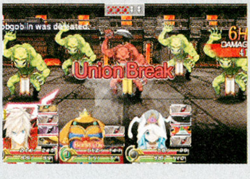
Garnet



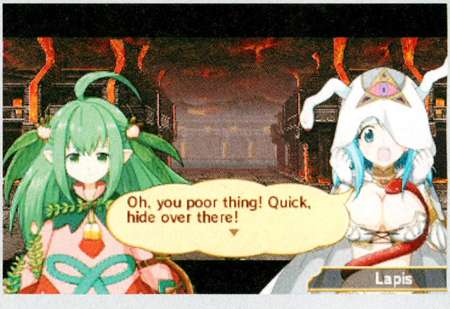
well-timed button presses as circles overlap one another, after which the foe-turned-follower will join your entourage and can be assigned to any Master. Followers help in many ways; when you attack or use a skill in battle, there's a random chance that your followers will unleash attacks of their own, and when enemies strike, your followers may leap out to absorb the damage or deflect the hit. There are also special skills that you can use only when you've enlisted followers that possess certain elemental affinities.

Furthermore, there are special army-versus-army clashes—known as Judgment Battles—in which your fate is in your followers' hands. In these fast-paced rhythm-game-inspired fights you'll primarily need to press various directions on the Control Pad as arrows scroll across the screen, but you'll also have to be ready to rapidly mash buttons when a follower engages an enemy one-on-one, and to quickly press the correct button when one of your Master characters jumps in with a special attack. But having followers is a give-and-take relationship; if you want them to fight for you, you'll need to give them some attention in return. After battles or upon entering town, a follower may ask you a question and you'll have to answer with the "most charismatic" response (from a list of four) to keep your lackey in a good mood. Happy followers are more effective followers!

Considering the challenges you'll be facing, you'll need all the help you can get. To receive an audience with Clunea, you must enter and reach the cores of gargantuan living structures known as Titans. These labyrinthine, multilevel, first-person-view dungeons (which make effective use of the handheld system's stereoscopic 3D) quickly ramp up in difficulty and are packed with adversity to overcome—such as one-way passages, and floor traps that inflict damage on your party when you step on them. The random enemy encounters, naturally, get

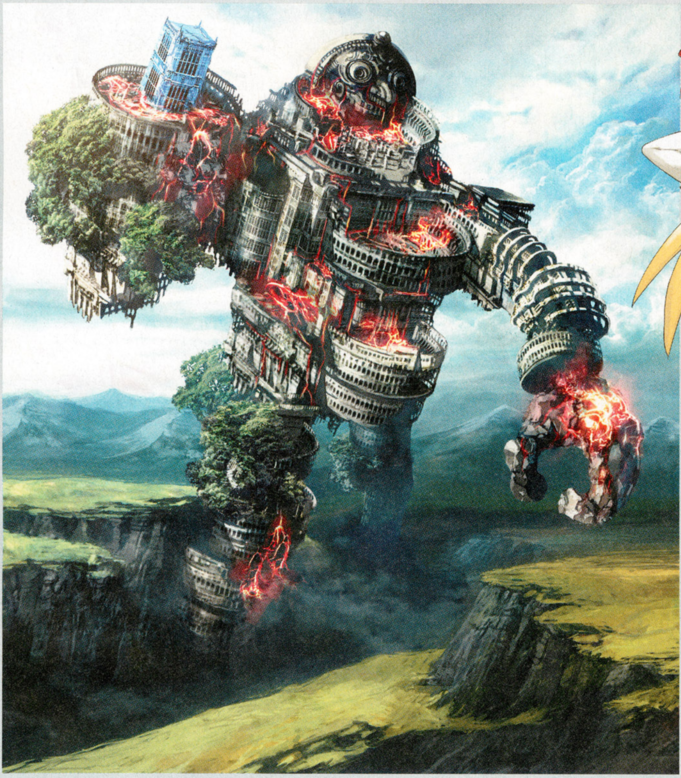


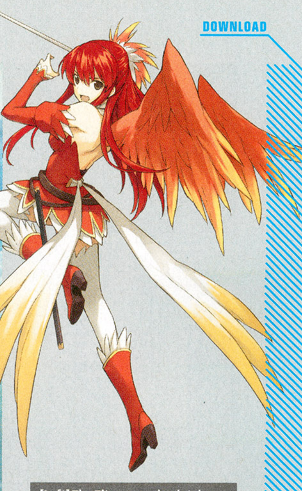
bgoblin was defeated.



Oh, you poor thing! Quick, hide over there!

Lapis





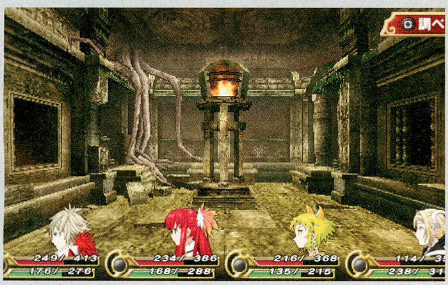
[Left] The Titans are absolutely huge. This is just the first one!

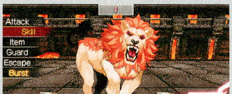
tougher the deeper you proceed into each Titan; as is typical for this type of RPG, you'll have to take advantage of your foes' weaknesses if you don't want to suffer a humiliating defeat. Making matters even more challenging is the fact that you occasionally have to face so many enemies that they'll surround you, spanning two or even three screens.

Fortunately, you have a few tricks up your sleeve, as well. Large enemy groups are typically controlled by a powerful leader; defeating him will cause a Union Break, which inflicts status ailments on other enemies in the vicinity (causing them to freeze, for example, or to recoil in fear). When things get especially rough you'll want to call upon your Burst Skills. Fueled by a meter that increases as you give and receive damage, Burst Skills are powerful character-specific techniques that typically inflict massive punishment on every foe in sight or bestow beneficial effects on every member of your party.

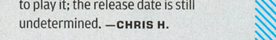
When you're not fighting for survival in the depths of a Titan, you'll have the chance to kick back and relax in town. Here you'll be able to rest and recuperate at the inn, buy goods (including weapons, armor, and supplies) at the store, and craft dozens of types of items in the synthesis shop using sundries you've acquired while exploring the dungeons. Additionally, you'll be able to take on side quests at the local tavern, thus earning rewards for accomplishing tasks such as slaying a certain type of enemy, excavating a specific kind of ore, or gaining a particular number of followers.

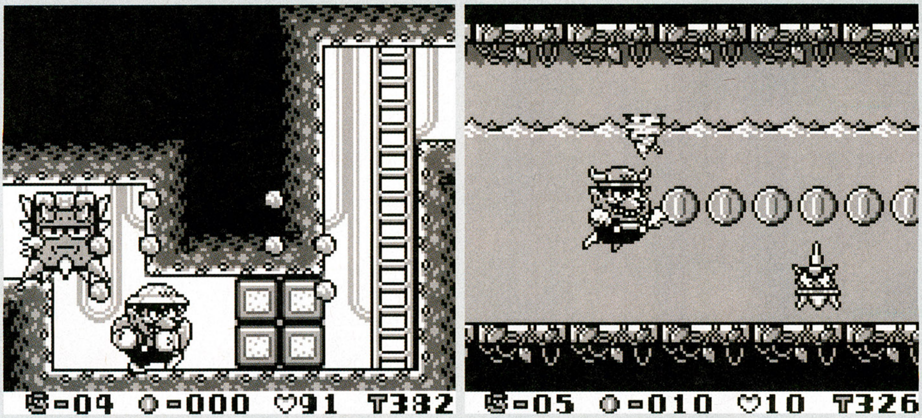
As you can tell, Unchained Blades provides a lot to see and do, and the adventure is absolutely massive. The game features more than seven chapters, each of which should contain 10 to 15 hours of gameplay. Considering the game's roots as a retail product, it's no stretch to call it the most involving, ambitious eShop title yet. The only downside is that you might have to wait a while to play it; the release date is still undetermined. **—CHRIS H.**





What body I'm in doesn't matter. I'll always be me.
Fang


Nightmare took 1 Hit
33 Damage



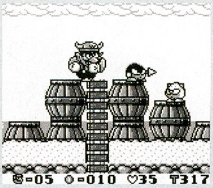
Whether on land or underwater, you can be sure of two things: Wario wants all the treasure he can get his hands on, and he's in desperate need of a breath mint.

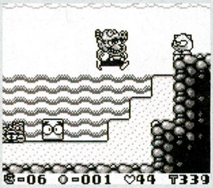
Greed Is Good

Wario Land: Super Mario Land 3 charges toward N3DS Virtual Console.

IT TAKES A pretty strong personality to steal the spotlight from Mario, but that's exactly what happened when Wario hijacked Mario's series of portable games right out from under him. Introduced as the main villain in Super Mario Land 2, the gassy, garlic-munching king of greed became the star of that game's sequel. With its impending release on the Nintendo 3DS Virtual Console, we're looking forward to reliving the first time players could control that lovable scoundrel, Wario.

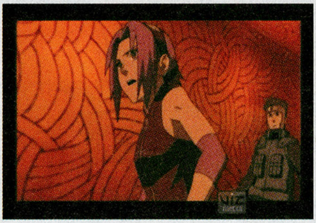
Although it's a platform game, the mechanics are quite a bit different from the previous Mario Land titles. Wario's goal is—of course—to swipe as much treasure as possible from a band of pirates. Pilfered coins can be hoarded, thrown at enemies, or spent on bonus games in an attempt to earn even more cash. To aid him in his fight against his scurvy foes, Wario can find helmets that grant him the ability to smash through blocks, breathe fire, and fly. Even when not wearing a helmet, Wario can charge into enemies, pick them up, and toss them around. There are multiple endings that depend on how much treasure you collect, and you can bet we'll try to see them all when Wario Land arrives in the near future. **—PHIL T.**





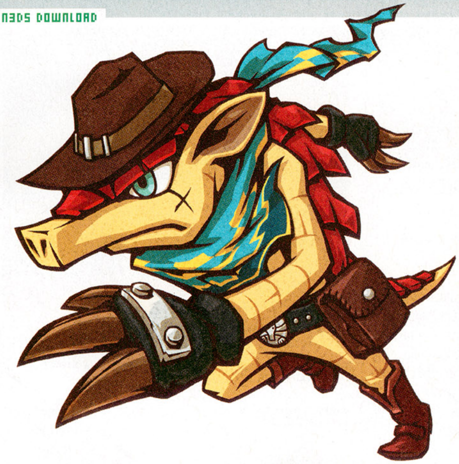
Hulu Plus Comes to Wii

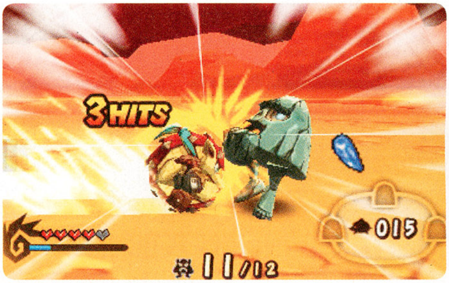
GOOD NEWS, TV junkies: you can now stream a variety of shows and movies to your Wii console via the Hulu Plus service. As with Netflix, getting access to Hulu Plus's wide array of programming isn't free—it'll cost you $7.99 a month (and you must have a broadband Internet connection). Fortunately, new subscribers can get a one-week free trial by visiting www.hulu.com/plus/wii. **—JUSTIN C.**



hulu
PLUS
Wii Menu
Start

N3DS DOWNLOAD





DILLON'S ROLLING WESTERN

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** GENRE: **ACTION-STRATEGY** PRICE: **$9.99**

It takes a thick skin in order to make it on the frontier. Fortunately, few skins come thicker than Dillon's, Nintendo's newest hero and the star of Dillon's Rolling Western.

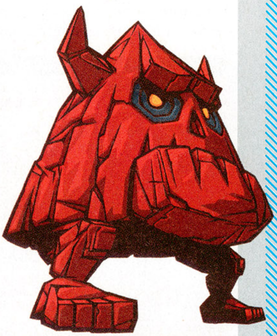
As the strong, silent armadillo, you're joined by a chatty squirrel sidekick named Russ as you make your way from town to town, helping the locals protect their herds of Scruffle Hogs from the carnivorous stone monsters known as Grocks. Doing so involves not only setting up protection for the town in tower-defense style, but also getting hands-on with the approaching enemy.

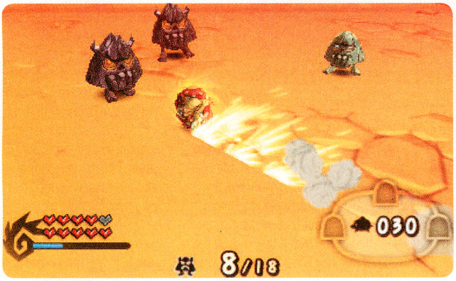
The game spans 10 towns, with three days of progressive difficulty spent in each, and those days are divided into multiple parts. When the sun is out you'll establish gun towers and watchtowers, perform side quests, and make other preparations. When the sun sets, the Grocks come out and it's up to you to deal with those that your towers can't by using Dillon's unique style of rolling-and-punching combat. The primarily touch-screen controls are especially effective in battle, where swiping in different directions sends Dillon rolling through one enemy after the next. It's fast, frenetic, and fun.

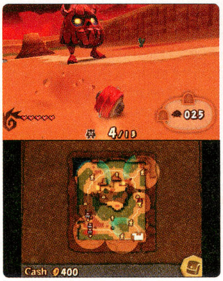
On the surface, Dillon's Rolling Western might look like child's play, but this is no game for greenhorns; it's as tough as they come and doesn't hold your hand. If you forgo the manual, you'll pretty much have to figure out everything for yourself. Plus, there are lots of decisions to make regarding limited resources: will you use your money to fortify the city gates, or invest in guns for your tower? You have only so much time to decide, and you can't have it all. But when you succeed, it's very satisfying.

Complementing the strategic action is a Wild West setting—a relative rarity in video games. The plains of the frontier are a pleasure to roll through thanks in no small part to the fitting music, and the environments keep you on your toes with rogue Grocks and mines that change locations each day. There are also ruins scattered about, filled with treasure chests that elicit a Zelda-inspired feeling when opened.

Dillon's Rolling Western has a few minor shortcomings—there's no way to tell how long you have until sundown, for instance, and the side quests/characters tend to repeat with different dressings—but it's still a great Nintendo eShop offering. Hopefully we'll see more from Dillon and Russ in the future. **—DAVID O.**



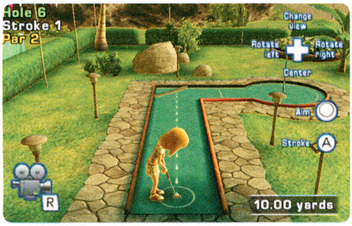




Recommended

EVALUATION STATION

N3DS DOWNLOAD



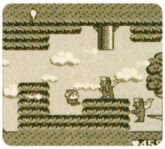
FUN! FUN! MINIGOLF TOUCH!

PUBLISHER: **SHIN'EN MULTIMEDIA** GENRE: **SPORTS** PRICE: **$4.99**

Its enthusiastic title might seem a little odd, but Fun! Fun! Minigolf Touch! is really just that: a portable minigolf game that's pretty darn fun. You can use either touch-screen controls or the Circle Pad and A Button to make your strokes; personally I found it most comfortable to aim with the Circle Pad and then swing with the stylus. The title's charming appearance and simple gameplay initially lure you in, and each cup's diverse mix of minigolf courses keep you addicted. There's also a slew of content to unlock with the coins you earn from tournaments, including additional competitions, trick-shot challenges, and a setting for 8-bit sound effects. I'd say that the game is a hole-in-one, but I do wish that there was an option to replay specific holes rather than having to cycle through an entire cup. —**CODY M.**

Recommended

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



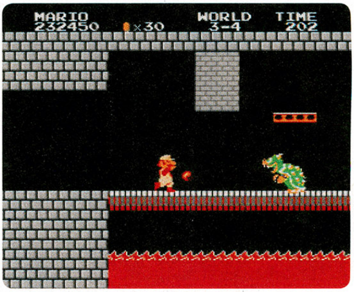
MARU'S MISSION

PLATFORM: **GAME BOY**
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: **1991**
PUBLISHER: **JALECO/HAMSTER**
GENRE: **ACTION**
PRICE: **$2.99**

There are few games with an odder structure than this. The bizarre power-ups are overpowered, certain collected weapons can't be used until the end of the stage, you can occasionally walk on the ceiling, and holding down the jump button allows you to float offscreen and over any obstacles. Factor in some weird glitches, and you're left with a game that's more curious than entertaining. —**PHIL T.**

Grumble Grumble

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



SUPER MARIO BROS.

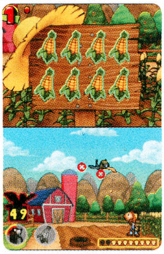
PLATFORM: **NES** ORIGINALLY RELEASED: **1985** PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
GENRE: **PLATFORMER** PRICE: **$4.99**

Chris H.'s Pick

No matter how old it gets or how many times it's rereleased, you can't say no to an all-time great like Super Mario Bros. This is the game that introduced players to warp pipes and Super Mushrooms and ushered in a new era of gaming. If you didn't already receive this title for free as part of the Ambassador Program, then it should jump to the top of your download queue; that's doubly true if you've never experienced this classic before.

Recommended

DSiWARE



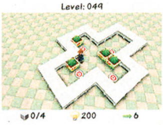
40-IN-1 EXPLOSIVE MEGAMIX

PUBLISHER: **NORDCURRENT**
GENRE: **ACTION**
PRICE: **800 POINTS/$7.99**

The Megamix franchise advances an intriguing theory: there's strength in numbers for games that suck. Here, 40 games that suck—many of which fall into the "dodge stuff" category—cling together so that they might punish anyone unwary enough to buy them. —**PATRICK C.**

Grumble Grumble

DSiWARE



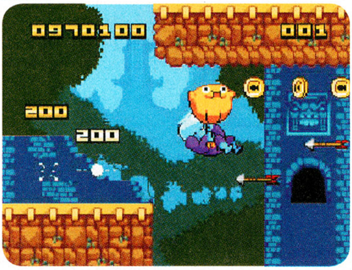
BOX PUSHER

PUBLISHER: **COSMIGO**
GENRE: **PUZZLE**
PRICE: **500 POINTS/$4.99**

As its title suggests, Box Pusher is a puzzler of the push-one-or-more-boxes-to-designated-targets variety. The gameplay is utterly standard, but the quality of the execution is notable; appealing visuals, a controllable camera (for altering the perspective shown on the upper screen), an "undo" bar for rewinding moves, multiplayer support, and—most impressively—a level editor spice things up nicely. That said, it's still...box-pushing. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



FLIPPER 2: FLUSH THE GOLDFISH

PUBLISHER: **ENGINE SOFTWARE** GENRE: **PLATFORMER** PRICE: **500 POINTS/$4.99**

Flipper 2 is a weird hybrid between a platformer and WarioWare. As you move to a new screen, you have a split second to press the action button in the proper fashion, or you're doomed. It's a novel concept, but it only half works. With zero warning before each screen, you'll frequently die before you realize what you should have done. This turns the game into a memorization exercise, and that's not much fun. The main character, which is heavily inspired by Earthworm Jim, also straddles that fine line between homage and rip-off. —**PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE

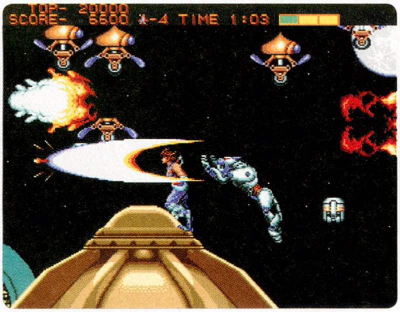
GO SERIES: UNDEAD STORM

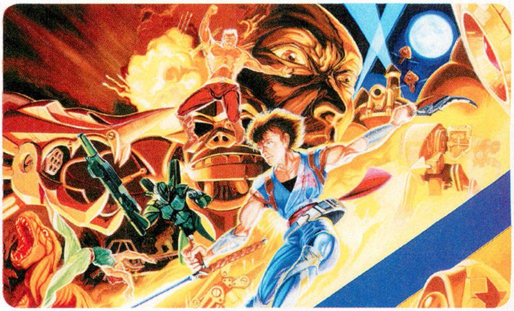
PUBLISHER: **GAMEBRIDGE**
GENRE: **SHOOTER**
PRICE: **200 POINTS/$1.99**

On the plus side, Go Series: Undead Storm delivers lots of zombie-shooting action, competent partner AI, and solid controls. On the negative side, the visuals are plain ugly and the gameplay is quite limited. Despite some varied weapons and enemies, the action becomes very monotonous after you've defeated a few waves of enemies; boss battles are the only interesting part. Luckily, the budget price helps partially offset such flaws. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

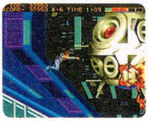
Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE

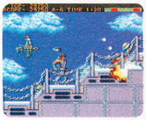




STRIDER

PLATFORM: SEGA GENESIS **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1990 **PUBLISHER:** SEGA **GENRE:** ACTION **PRICE:** 800 POINTS



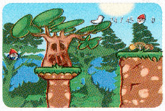


Chris H.'s Pick

Originally a Capcom arcade title, Strider is certifiably insane. It's as if the developers took every ridiculous idea they could think of and tossed them into a single game. One moment you're battling little robots in furry Russian hats, and the next you might be fighting a giant mechanical gorilla, running full-tilt down an exploding mountainside, walking on the ceiling, clashing with a pirate named Captain Beard, experiencing zero gravity, riding atop brontosaurs, slaying pterodactyls, or facing a boss who attacks you with deadly piranhas. (The enemies would make for an awesome line of action figures.) All the craziness is supported by lightning-fast action (you've gotta love slicing through enemies with your blade), responsive controls, excellent 2D visuals, and an eclectic but superb soundtrack. The game is fairly short and there are a few parts that feel cheap by modern standards, but Strider is nonetheless an absolute blast. Check it out and discover why it's considered one of the finest games of its era.

Recommended

WiiWARE



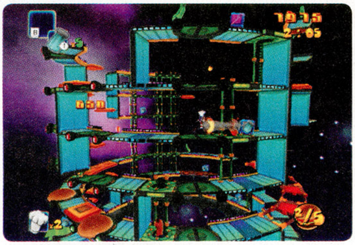
2 FAST 4 GNOMZ

PUBLISHER: QUBICGAMES
GENRE: PLATFORMER
PRICE: 500 POINTS

Given its title, it's fortunate that 2 Fast 4 Gnomz is intentionally silly; the game's start informs players that their quest requires the collection of a princess and...socks. The socks are a ridiculous conceit; everyone knows that platform games force you to collect *something*. Here, players—able only to jump or deploy a chute—rack up socks as they hurtle automatically through levels. As you might expect, the action grows tedious quickly, but those who enjoy level memorization might like the exercise. —PATRICK C.

Hmmm...

WiiWARE



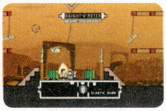
BURGERTIME WORLD TOUR

PUBLISHER: MONKEYPAW GAMES **GENRE:** ACTION **PRICE:** 1,000 POINTS

I would imagine game designers fear creating a new title based on an arcade classic and ending up with something less fun than the ~30-year-old predecessor. Sadly, that's what happened here. The level layout, where stages are built on a cylinder, works, but the camera is zoomed in so close that it's near impossible to see enemies when you climb the game's many ladders. Combine that with the horrendously sluggish controls, and you'll suffer many needless deaths. Given BurgerTime's heavy emphasis on twitch gameplay, these problems are rather severe. Perhaps to compensate for these issues, you now have the ability to jump over enemies, but this just eliminates challenge instead of adding technique. —PHIL T.

Grumble Grumble

WiiWARE



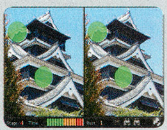
NEWTON VS. THE HORDE

PUBLISHER: RADIATIONBURN
GENRE: PUZZLE
PRICE: 500 POINTS

Creating traps to crush zombies may sound appealing, but Newton vs. The Horde completely fails in its attempt to be a physics-based puzzle game. Not only are most levels poorly designed, but your kill quota can usually be filled by skipping the trap setups and chucking light bulbs at the undead creatures. Cumbersome controls, glitchy physics, and tasteless sphincter jokes are only a few of many issues that plague this title. —CODY M.

Grumble Grumble

ALSO AVAILABLE



In addition to the games reviewed on these pages, a pair of DSiWare titles is now available in the Nintendo eShop and the Nintendo DSi Shop. **iSpot Japan** (200 Points/$1.99) is a visual puzzle game that challenges players to identify differences between photos taken at various locations throughout the Land of the Rising Sun. The game features 150 photos and three difficulty levels.... Also on offer is **Lola's Alphabet Train** (200 Points/$1.99), an educational program designed to help youngsters with their spelling via five alphabet-based activities and an easy-to-use touch-screen interface.

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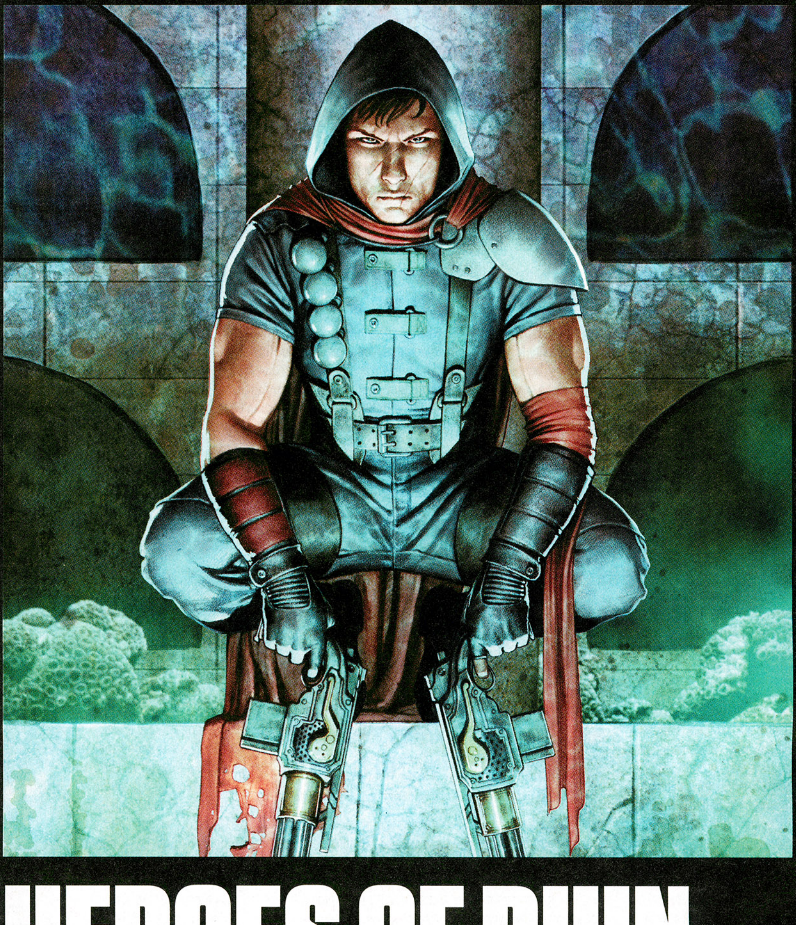
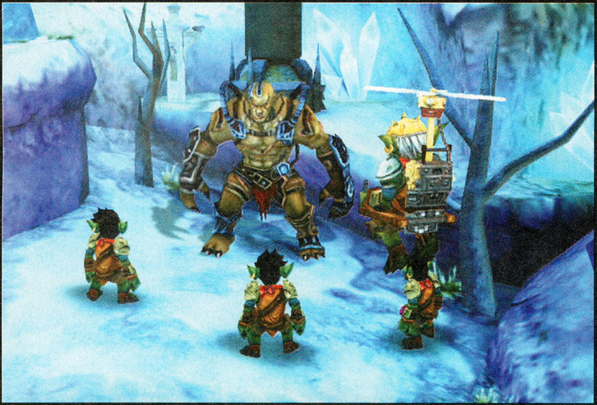
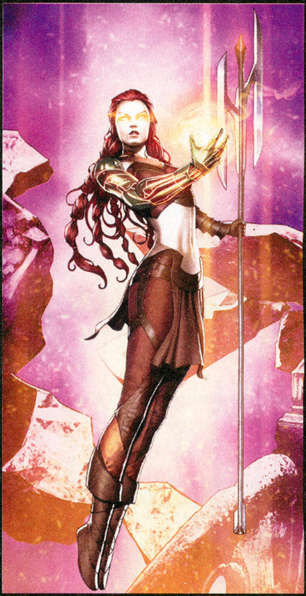


HEROES OF RUIN

Make your enemies eat lead or a knuckle sandwich.





IN OUR PREVIOUS coverage of action-RPG Heroes of Ruin, we tested the sword-wielding Vindicator (in Vol. 269) and the magic-employing Alchitect (in Vol. 275). For our third hands-on demo, we got a chance to riddle enemies with bullets using the pistol-packing Gunslinger and bash baddies in their faces with the fist-swinging Savage, the final two playable characters of the game's fearsome foursome.

More than that, though, we got to start the game from the very beginning, allowing us to test out the character-customization options. After selecting a character, you can modify his skin tone, hairstyle, hair color, and the color of one of his articles of clothing (you can alter the hue of the Gunslinger's cape, for example). It's not an especially robust customization system, but it gets the job done.

Once you've finalized your hero's appearance (you cannot make any changes later), you get a little backstory for your quest. A century ago the world of Veil was ravaged by war—until great beasts put an end to it and established cities across the land. Shortly before Heroes of Ruin begins, one of these beasts, a sphinx called Ataraxis, falls under a curse. Whoever can cure him will earn a huge reward, so mercenaries from far and wide make their way to Ataraxis's city of Nexus in an attempt to vie for the bounty. The game's four protagonists have their own reasons for trying to collect the reward, but regardless of which character you choose, the story starts out the same: some sort of ginormous cephalopod attacks the boat you're on, and you and the rest of the survivors wind up on the shore. Unfortunately, it's no safe harbor; all kinds of deadly creatures abound in a nearby cave—and you are tasked with fighting your way to the boat on the other side in order to save everyone.

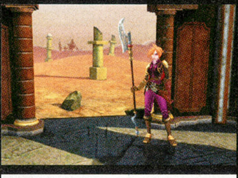
This coral-ridden cave serves as a nice appetizer to the hack-'n'-slash feast that awaits you in the rest of the game. Here you face off against massive turtles and crabs, as well as little imps. With the Savage you have to get up close and personal, tapping B to punch enemies. You can also hold B, then release the button to unleash a spinning attack. At this early stage, the Savage has only one skill: Meat Hook. He throws a hook on a chain, allowing him to stun enemies and pull them toward him. This is one of his Huntsman skills, but leveling up grants you access to the Ravager and Maniac skill trees.

The Gunslinger requires playing with the complete opposite approach, hitting enemies from afar rather than letting them get in your face. His initial skill, Blaze Wave, serves as a great example of his long-range play style. With this Saboteur attack, the Gunslinger fires off several shots in an arc, setting some baddies ablaze in the process. Should an adversary get too close, the Gunslinger can slice them with the blades attached to his firearms. As with the Savage, leveling up unlocks skills in two other trees—in the Gunslinger's case, Wildcard and Commando.

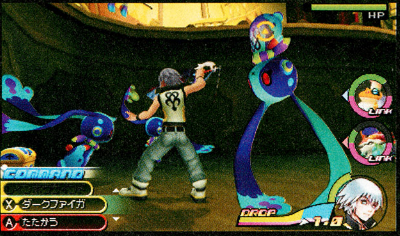
Successfully traversing the cave and reaching the boat at the end allows you and the formerly shipwrecked survivors to continue on your way to Nexus. It's in this metropolis that the game proper begins—you can buy and sell loot and take on a wide array of quests. Of course, your most important mission is to save Ataraxis. It's not an easy task, but you can get help from some human allies, as Heroes of Ruin supports up-to-four-player co-op via online or local wireless.

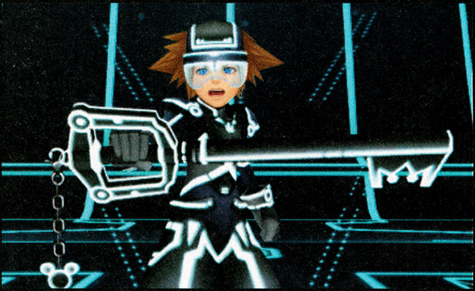
—JUSTIN C.

N3DS PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **N-SPACE**
RELEASE: **SPRING 2012**



[Above] Character customization isn't limited to stuff like hairstyles—equipping loot also alters your appearance.





[Above] Both Riku and Sora are back and ready for action. (Note: All screens are taken from the Japanese version of the game.)

KINGDOM HEARTS 3D: DREAM DROP DISTANCE

Drop everything.

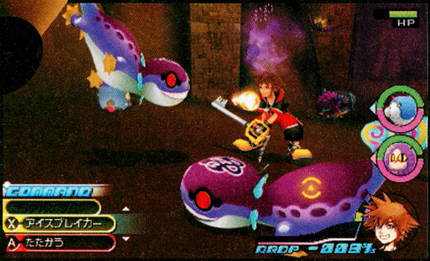
SINCE OUR MASSIVE look at Dream Drop Distance last issue, we've learned some intriguing new plot details that have us entranced once again by the magical crossover world of Disney and Square Enix. The lore of the Kingdom Hearts series may be tricky to follow, but keeping up with the story certainly pays dividends this time. Heroes Sora and Riku face their toughest challenge yet as they go through the trials of the Mark of Mastery to awaken worlds trapped in sadness and sleep. Only then will they become Keyblade Masters with the ability to defeat Xehanort (who's apparently been revived since the events of Kingdom Hearts II) once and for all.

Parts of the story are told through flashbacks from Xehanort's perspective, which helps fill in previous story details and characters' backgrounds—especially helpful for newcomers to the series, who may be afraid of feeling lost (although it's a welcome refresher even for longtime fans too). Through our seeing his side of the story, perhaps Xenahort will become less of a one-dimensional villain. And he's not the only Organization XIII member making a comeback; fan-favorite antihero Axel also seems to have a new lease on life.

The story is important, but it's not all there is, of course. Dream Drop Distance's fights are fast-paced, real-time affairs that are similar to those in previous games but sport quite a few new twists. Creatures called Dream Eaters now fight alongside Sora and Riku, and you can collect 'em all and train each one to unleash powerful moves and attacks. Additionally, the game features acrobatic new attacks and a meter called the Drop Gauge. That gauge not only determines when you'll switch control between Riku and Sora, but also adds a strategic element in the form of status boosts that augment the next hero you control.

All-new worlds brimming with Disney magic, and what seems like a gripping struggle between good and evil? We can't wait to fully immerse ourselves in Dream Drop Distance's vibrant adventure. —**CAROLYN G.**

N3DS PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **SQUARE ENIX**
RELEASE: **2012**

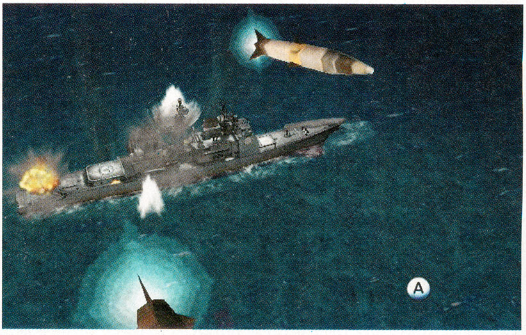


BATTLESHIP

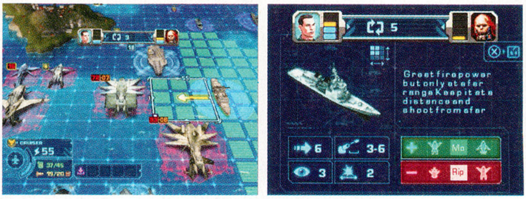
You sank my...you know how it goes.

Inspired by the upcoming movie, which is in turn based on the classic board game, Battleship is a military-strategy title cut from the same cloth as the Advance Wars series. Naturally, the emphasis is on commanding naval vessels of various sizes and strengths—including patrol boats, cruisers, frigates, destroyers, submarines, and (of course) battleships. However, the enemy fleet is a bit more exotic—they're alien craft controlled by invaders from another world. Regardless, you and the enemy will face off in 30 turned-based strategy missions, moving units into position, capturing harbors, and unleashing long- and short-range weapons until only one side is left standing. Six different officers will provide various bonuses to the ships under their command, along with unique special abilities that can turn the tide of battle. Additionally, you'll be able to engage in first-person-view ship-to-ship duels, using real-time actions to sink the enemy craft. —**CHRIS H.**

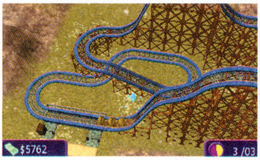
Wii DS N3DS
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
DEVELOPER: **MAGIC POCKETS**
RELEASE: **MAY 2012**

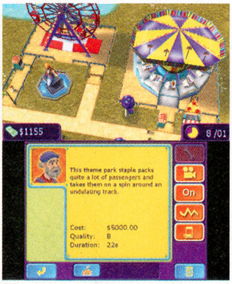


[Below] Like in the Battleship board game, units come in different sizes. Bigger units make easier targets, but they boast better defense and offense, as well as other benefits.



Great firepower
but only at afar
range Keep it at a
distance and
shoot from afar

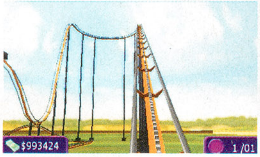




This theme park staple packs quite a lot of passengers and takes them on a spin around an undulating track.

Cost: $5000.00
Quality: B
Duration: 22s

[Above] You'll get to manage many attractions, not just rollercoasters.



RollerCoaster®
TYCOON 3D

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3D

Fasten your safety harness.

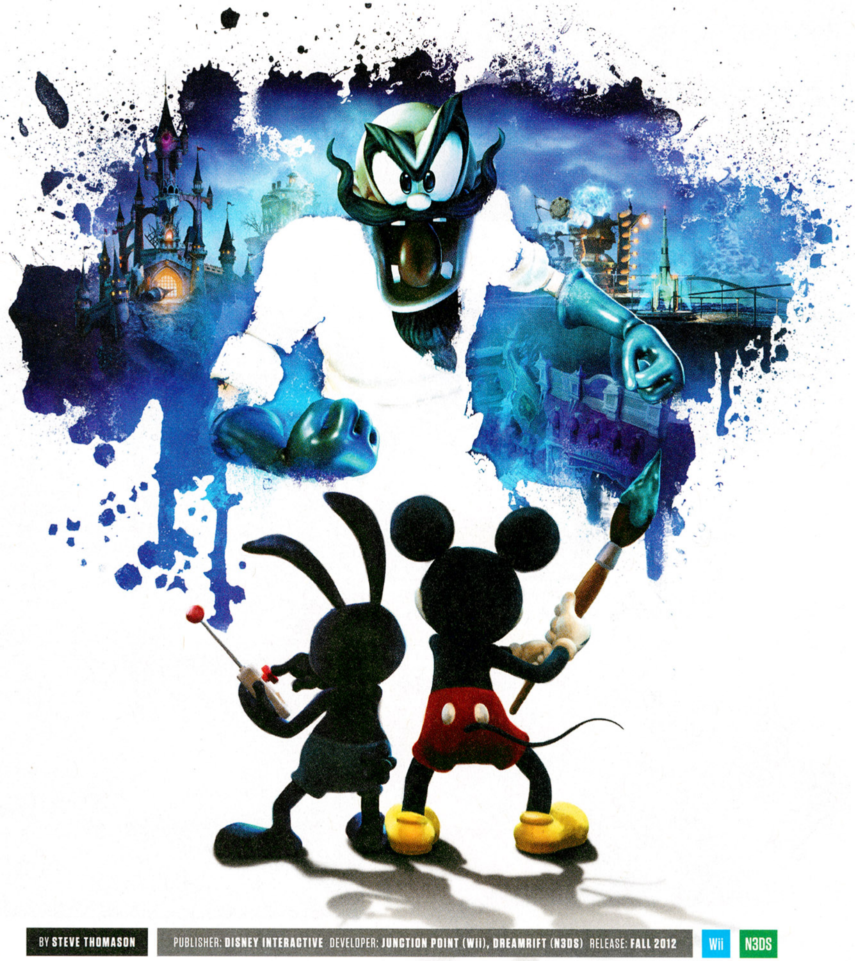
For the first time in eight years, the acclaimed theme-park simulator is back. But this isn't just RollerCoaster Tycoon's first portable outing; it's also the series's debut on a Nintendo system. You'll learn all the tricks of the trade in Coaster Story mode, where you're cast as a kid who aspires to become an amusement-park manager and rollercoaster designer. Each scenario has you improving already-existing parks, whether you're constructing additional coasters or attracting enough guests to accumulate a profit goal. You can also import rides you've built in the title's Coaster Creator mode in order to fulfill mission objectives. But in case managing someone else's attraction isn't your thing, there's also a Park Sandbox mode, in which you're given a whopping plot of land and infinite funds to create your dream park. Whether you decide to build gentle joyrides or daunting deathtraps, you can test-ride all of your coasters in first-person stereoscopic 3D. —**CODY M.**

N3DS
PUBLISHER: **ATARI**
DEVELOPER: **N-SPACE**
RELEASE: **MAY 2012**

Double Feature:

Mickey and Oswald return to save the day in not one but two **Epic Mickey** sequels!

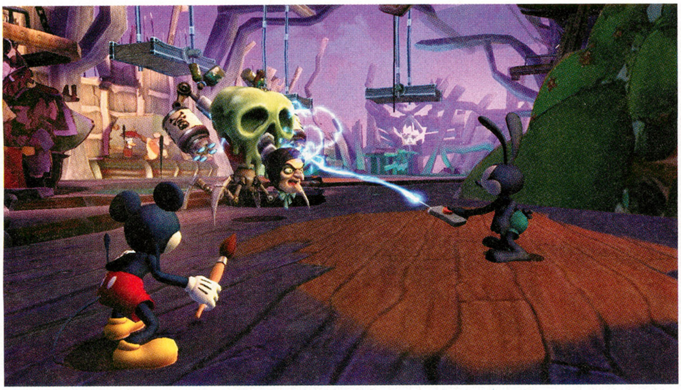
THERE WAS A TIME when Mickey Mouse could legitimately include "video game star" on his considerable list of credentials. Those days had begun to seem a distant memory until Warren Spector and his team at Junction Point jump-started the mouse's lagging career with Disney Epic Mickey. The game was a critical and commercial success, and now Mickey looks to continue his comeback with a pair of brand-new installments in the Epic Mickey saga—The Power of Two for Wii and Power of Illusion for Nintendo 3DS.



BY STEVE THOMASON

PUBLISHER: **DISNEY INTERACTIVE** DEVELOPER: **JUNCTION POINT (Wii), DREAMRIFT (N3DS)** RELEASE: **FALL 2012**

Wii N3DS



Disney Epic Mickey: The Power of Two

"The response from fans has been overwhelming," says Spector while looking back on the original Epic Mickey. "I've never received so much heartfelt fan mail about a game." That's impressive given the veteran developer's extensive body of work, which includes such all-time greats as System Shock and Deus Ex. Offering a boldly creative take on Disney history, unique paint-and-thinner game mechanics, and a "playstyle matters" approach to choice, Epic Mickey obviously struck a chord with players.

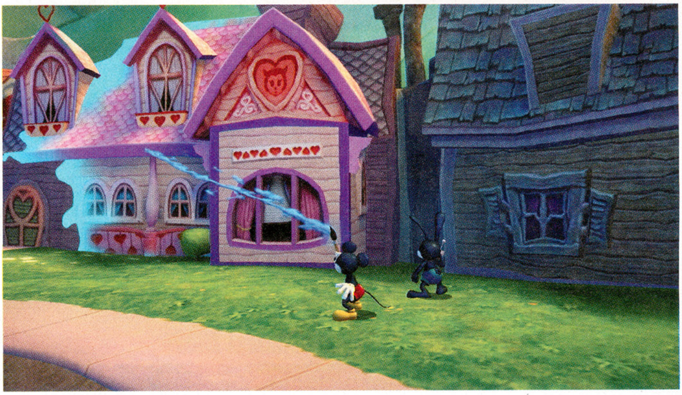
The Power of Two retains those core elements and adds what Spector tells us was the number-one thing fans wanted from a sequel: cooperative play. While one person controls Mickey, a second player can hop in at any time and join the fun as Oswald the Lucky Rabbit. As before, Mickey wields the power of paint and thinner with his magical brush. Oswald, on the other hand, brandishes a remote control that can emit bolts of electricity. The device has a variety of applications, from activating all sorts of different machines around Wasteland to short-circuiting the mechanical Beetleworx so they fight alongside our heroes (similar to how Mickey can use paint to befriend Blotlings). What's more, should mouse and rabbit "cross the streams" of their respective powers, the potency of Mickey's paint or thinner will be amplified. Such teamwork can erase or befriend even the toughest foes in record time.

In addition to his remote control, Oswald possesses a couple of unique abilities that further differentiate him from Mickey. He can spin his ears like a helicopter to hover midjump, for example, or detach one of his arms and use it like a boomerang. As bizarre as the latter may sound, it's actually a nod to Oswald's classic cartoons, in which he would pull himself apart in all sorts of bizarrely useful ways. (If you haven't seen those old shorts, do yourself a favor and track them down.) The most obvious function of the "boom-arm-rang" is to retrieve items from afar, but as we observed during our demo, it's also useful for smacking Mickey upside the head if player two is feeling mischievous. "There is 'griefing' in the game," confirms design director Chase Jones with a laugh. "Mickey and Oswald have this great comical relationship in the story, and we wanted to make sure we reflected that in gameplay." Friendly rivalry notwithstanding, the two can also lend each other a helping hand. If one character falls in battle, the other can revive him. Only when both heroes kick the bucket will you have to restart from the previous checkpoint.

Even during solo play, Oswald remains an integral part of the experience as an AI-controlled partner. "He's with you every step of the way," explains Spector. "And I've got to say, the team really stepped up. His AI is pretty darned good. He genuinely does helpful things." Beyond that, the lucky rabbit's constant presence brings a heightened energy and personality to the proceedings. He often stole the show despite limited screen time in the first Epic Mickey, so we're happy to see him figure more prominently in the sequel.

BUILDING A BETTER MOUSECAPADE

Despite the aforementioned flood of fan mail about the original game, Junction Point recognized there were certain shortcomings that need to be addressed. Foremost among



them was the camera. Spector points out that the mix of platforming and adventure-style gameplay presents a unique challenge when it comes to providing the ideal perspective, as does the player's ability to erase entire portions of the environment. “But we can do better,” he insists. “We've made hundreds and hundreds of changes. We've worked with Nintendo directly and they've given us great feedback.” Indeed, even at this early stage of development, the improvement we saw during our demo was dramatic. The camera does a much better job of following Mickey's brush and framing the action than it did in the first game—so much so that we felt compelled to manually adjust our viewpoint on only a couple of occasions.

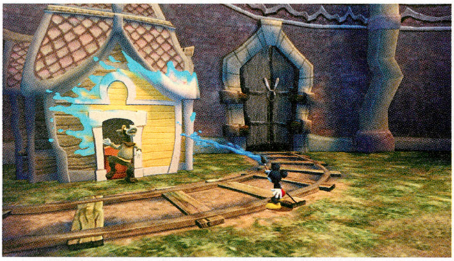
The second big change is that all of the dialogue will be fully voiced this time around. Spector admits that the decision to forgo voice acting in the previous game was a mistake. “I thought about games like Mario and all of the Japanese RPGs that I'd played over the years,” he recalls. “They have what I call ‘bark’ text. And so I said, ‘Let's do that.’ We used the real Disney voice actors. So it's really Mickey. It's really Donald. And they did amazing stuff with grunts and groans and squeaks. But in [the sequel], every character says every word, and it's magical. Obviously you can get more emotion out of a line of dialogue than you can out of even the most effectively acted grunt.” To accompany the official Disney vocal talent for the established characters, Junction Point secured Frank Welker as the voice of Oswald and Cary Elwes as Gus the Gremlin. The studio also enlisted award-winning comic-book writer Marv Wolfman to help pen the dialogue and contribute to the story.

Finally, Spector and his team want to do a better job of living up to their “playstyle matters” mantra—of ensuring that the choices you make have lasting and meaningful consequences. “When all was said and done, the lack of persistence was the thing that most disappointed me with the first game,” Spector admits. “Your choices really didn't matter as much as they could have. We're working very hard to make sure that's not the case this time. Persistence is hugely important in a game where playstyle matters.” The most basic example of that comes when you make the effort to paint or thin everything on a level. Not only will there be repercussions for doing so this time, but those changes will remain even after you leave the area. Your decisions also have enduring ramifications on how the denizens of Wasteland respond to you, and even affect what Mickey is able to do. The mouse will actually gain or lose abilities based on how you interact with the world, though Junction Point isn't ready to divulge specifics on that just yet.

WASTELAND IN PERIL

After detailing co-op play and discussing how his team was going to improve upon their previous effort, Spector showed us the beautifully rendered intro cinematic for The Power of Two. It opens on Oswald and his fellow Wastelanders cheerfully working side by side to rebuild their home after the events of the first game. Suddenly a massive earthquake strikes, and in the ensuing chaos Oswald finds himself face-to-menacing-face with a Beetleworx. Just then, the villainous Mad Doctor from the first Epic Mickey swoops in on his flying machine and... breaks into song.

“We're doing the first-ever musical comedy game,” effuses Spector. That's certainly not a statement we expected to hear during this

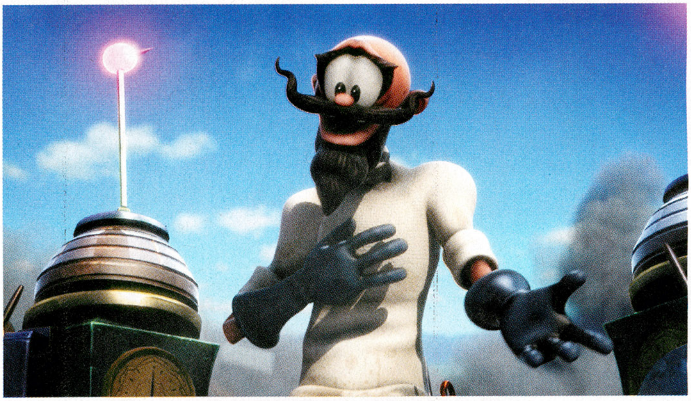


[Left] Each hub in The Power of Two has a train station that—if repaired—can serve as a shortcut from region to region.

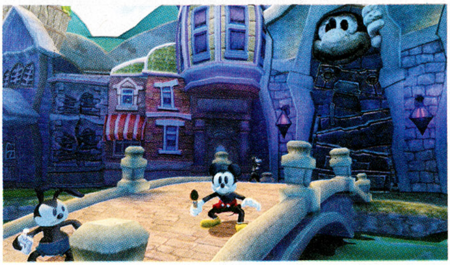
visit, but the Mad Doctor's highly entertaining number sells us on the idea immediately. In it, he claims to have seen the error of his ways and offers to help Wasteland's citizens battle an impending threat. Oswald is won over by the doc's performance, as well, and elects to join forces with him. Less convinced are Gus and Ortensia (Oswald's girlfriend), who thus summon Mickey back to Wasteland for help.

But first, our hero must take a detour to retrieve his magic brush. That leads to Yen Sid's lab, which serves as the site of a *Fantasia*-themed tutorial, complete with marching brooms and familiar "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" music. It also introduces the game's new physics engine. At one point Mickey reaches a series of floating globes in the middle of a large chasm. Only the bottom halves of the globes can be erased, but doing so causes the top halves to fall. Mickey can then paint the bottoms back in and use the newly flattened surfaces as platforms to cross the chasm. Though a rudimentary example, it illustrates how physics will play a bigger role in the game's puzzles.

From there, our demo leaps ahead to a new type of area called Dahl Engineering Corridors. In the first game players would travel between the different regions of Wasteland by jumping into film projectors and traversing 2D levels based on classic Mickey cartoons. At the beginning of The Power of Two, those projectors are offline due to the earthquake, so Mickey has to use the DECs to get around. These underground passages were cobbled together by the gremlins (the real-life brainchildren of author Roald Dahl) using forgotten Disney memorabilia, and as a result they're sort of like giant Rube Goldberg machines. To knock down a giant doll head blocking our path, for instance, we rolled a ball onto a pressure-sensitive panel and set off a series of events involving a mechanical turtle, a hamster wheel, and flying pies. The constant background activity really makes these levels come alive, and hardcore Disney aficionados will get a kick out of trying to identify the various relics. (We spotted a Chip portrait, as well as the whistles from *Steamboat Willie*.) As for the projectors, Jones promises that they *will* go back online eventually and provide a whole new batch of cartoon-inspired 2D levels. "And they're done in a different way to support Oswald being there," he teases.



Who knew the Mad Doctor could carry a tune? The lyrics for all of the game's song are being written by Disney veteran Mike Himmelstein, and Emmy Award-winning composer Jim Dooley is once again providing the music.



Our time with The Power of Two concluded in OzTown, which was one of the hubs in the original Epic Mickey. Things have changed quite a bit since then as the burg's residents have banded together to spruce up the place. Unfortunately, their efforts have been temporarily interrupted due to a flood of thinner caused by the earthquake. Mickey can lend a hand by placing sump pumps near the source of the flood, but he has a couple of options as to how to go about that. Gremlin Prescott points out that Mickey can get the job done much faster by retrieving just one pump and supercharging it. Animatronic Goofy thinks that's too dangerous and recommends gathering all three pumps and running them at normal speed. Though it'll take a bit longer, we decided to follow Goofy's suggestion. The pumps are scattered rather inconveniently throughout town, and recovering one of them requires use of the new Fairy sketch. As in the previous game, sketches are sort of like spells that allow Mickey to summon the corresponding subject for a variety of purposes. The Fairy sketch causes its target to float, which in this instance enables us to retrieve the pump from of a pool of thinner. (During our first attempt to use the sketch, we accidentally hit Goofy, causing him to humorously hang upside down in midair.)

Once all three pumps are in place, the thinner is drained from OzTown and Goofy gives us a unique pin for our efforts. Pins return as a special collectible and a nod to the real-life pin-hunting phenomenon at Disney's theme parks. "But we're taking the concept a step further this time," Jones hints. He also explains that we would have received a different reward for taking Prescott's shortcut, but that supercharging one of the pumps would have caused thinner to spray all over the surrounding homes.

Though brief, our return visit to Wasteland was a blast and left us anxious to see what else The Power of Two has in store. The folks at Junction Point established a solid foundation with the first game, and they seem to be building on it in all the right ways. "Now we can take things to a whole new level in terms of quality and depth of story," says Spector. "It's about taking all the things we did well in Epic Mickey and doing them even better."

Interview: The Power of Two

Of Mice and Rabbits

There may be no game developer that we enjoy interviewing more than Warren Spector. After checking out The Power of Two, we chatted with Junction Point's affable creative director about co-op play, the future of Epic Mickey, and...Suikoden?

NINTENDO POWER After your team completed the first Epic Mickey, was the plan always to work on a sequel next or did you consider other projects?

WARREN SPECTOR Whenever I start thinking about something, there' s a process I go through. The end result of that process—so far—has never been that there's just [one] game I want to make. I think in terms of magical threes. So Epic Mickey, like every other thing I've done, started out as a trilogy. I went into this with a three-part story. I had an idea that in the first game we were going to reintroduce Oswald to the world and remind people that Mickey could be a hero. In the second game we were going to make Oswald a playable character. Now that you know who he is and you presumably care about him, let's allow you to be him for a while—but not as the central figure of the game. And then, let's not talk about the third game, but you can probably use your imagination and figure out where this is going.

Likewise, with the soundtrack I thought, "First game: let's do some really amazing, dynamic music. Second game: let's introduce some songs. Third game: we're not going to talk about." [Laughs]

And I don't want to go into too much detail about the plotline that I conceived. It's not that I want to keep secrets. It's that I could tell you the story and it wouldn't matter. The reality is that I have never seen a three-part story I conceived actually realized the way I intended. So, for instance, the second Deus Ex game, Invisible War, was nothing like the second Deus Ex game I originally envisioned from a story standpoint. The teams I've worked with have been pretty good about following the gameplay progression we planned in advance, but in terms of the story, it's certainly going to change. That's for a variety of reasons. It's partly because teams do their best work when they're creatively and emotionally invested. So for me to dictate, "Well here's the story you're going to tell in the second game" is just stupid. They come up with better ideas than I ever could anyway. So we use my ideas as a starting point and then the team goes from there.

We love that The Power of Two is going to be a musical comedy. Will that element be integrated into gameplay at all?

The musical numbers will be incorporated into the story. They're vital to the way we communicate story and the way we reveal how characters are feeling. But we thought we were taking a big enough chance just adding songs to a game. Integrating them into the minute-to-minute gameplay would have been...not risky, exactly. We're not scared of risk! No, integrating songs into gameplay would have made The Power of Two a very different game, and we weren't quite ready to make that leap. Yet.

As a huge Disney fan, do you ever find yourself having to resist the temptation to bring in popular characters or elements that don't really belong in Wasteland?

That's a really interesting question. It's not really a temptation. It's kind of a frustration, I guess. I love characters like Donald and Goofy and Pluto. And Scrooge! Scrooge is my favorite Disney character. So it's frustrating that this is a world where they don't fit. But they don't fit. So the question sort of unasks itself.

The interesting thing—I've talked about this before and it's something that a lot of developers do—is that we don't just make a game story; we create a world beforehand. With Deus Ex, I knew what was happening on the moon, I knew what was happening in Africa, I knew what was happening in Mexico.... Players never went to any of those places, but it informed what happened in the game. In the same way, the world of Disney Epic Mickey is far more than just Wasteland. It's broken up into three worlds. There's Wasteland, there's the toon world where Mickey starts the game, and then there's the "real" world. There are references to audiences and animators and Walt Disney. The Wastelanders don't quite understand all this stuff. They understand the toon world. That's where they used to be. But nobody really understands the real world and what its impact is. So there is this other part of the [game] world that we haven't explored yet. Who

knows if we ever will? Wink, wink, nudge, nudge.

But there is this toon world where cartoon characters like Mickey and Donald and all the rest live. Their cartoons are just their lives. They don't even realize that *they're* cartoon characters. The tragedy of Wasteland is that all those characters are forgotten and rejected and they know it. But they have that self-awareness and that's an interesting thing to play with. They're tragic but self-aware, as opposed to the characters in toon world, who are happy and loved but have no self-awareness. Which one's better?

Now, we will never talk about this [in the games]. This is all below the surface. But I love playing with stuff like that. I love the fact that some player out there might some day think back on this and go, "Wow, you know, when I was 12 I played this game that made me think about self-awareness and tragedy and stuff." In a game that's just totally fun to play and jump around in. So all that stuff is a foundation for great storytelling. It's all in there. Maybe we will explore it explicitly someday. I don't know.

You mentioned earlier that you had the idea to introduce co-op in the second game when you were first conceiving the series. What was the impetus to make that a linchpin of the sequel?

The reason it was so important to do co-op...well, cutting to the chase, it's what I wanted to do. [Laughs] I don't tend to think much about what the competition is doing or whether I need these bullet points on the back of the box. I couldn't care less about that stuff. But I look at co-op gameplay these days, and I don't see much co-op. I don't see systems that really force—or even encourage—players to work together. Co-op gameplay is typically I do eight points of damage with a graphic that looks like a fireball and you do eight points of damage with a graphic that looks like a bullet. And I just thought it would be interesting to try to make a co-op storytelling experience where you're going through a story together with someone. Working together, you can really have a different experience than you can have in single-player.

When playing the game yourself, do you tend toward the paint/helpful approach or thinner/mischievous route?

I can't be mischievous even when I want to be! I have to hope we have plenty of testers taking the thinner route, because I'm way too lawful-good for that. Frankly, I'm *glad* thinner makes me uncomfortable. That means the game is allowing me to learn something about myself. It's not just about how to solve this puzzle, or how do I beat that monster. How you behave, with Mickey as your avatar, says as much about you, as a person, as it does about Mickey. I love that.

Have you given any thought to a Wii U version of the game?

We've certainly thought about it. It's a really interesting piece of hardware. Unfortunately, we were already too far into development by the time it was announced. So there's just no way we could get it out by the time Wii U launches. I mean, who knows what's going to happen in the future? But for right now, there are no plans. There is all sorts of fun stuff we could do with that controller, though.

How did the partnership with DreamRift on the Nintendo 3DS title come about?

We knew we didn't have the internal capacity—or expertise, frankly—to do a Nintendo 3DS game. I've said it before and I'll say it again: I'm a big Nintendo fan. I love Nintendo stuff. After I saw the N3DS for the first time at E3, I described it as the coolest thing in any category of thing I've ever seen at E3. [Laughs]

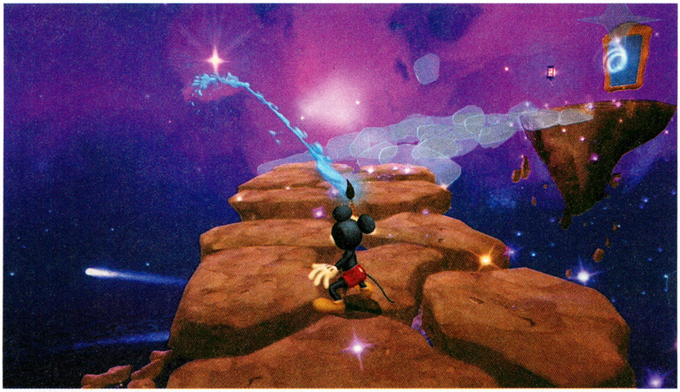
So I really wanted to do an N3DS game. I'd been working with some folks at [Disney's offices in] Glendale, and I just said, "Let's go find some great N3DS developers and see if we can get someone who's interested in making an Epic Mickey title for N3DS." DreamRift was one of several developers that seemed worth talking to and that expressed some interest. And once you start looking at track records...I mean, Henry Hatsworth and Monster Tale are terrific games. So we got in touch with them and, interestingly, Peter [Ong] flew out here and showed us a pitch for a game that involved painting and erasing on the bottom screen of the N3DS with action-adventure platforming on the top. And I just sort of went, "Huh. Think this was meant to be?" [Laughs]

Then we started talking about what a Mickey game could be like, and he said, "You know, I really wanna do a fortress that grows and changes as you explore the world and as you save different characters." And I said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. You're talking about Suikoden here!" That's one of my favorite Japanese RPGs. And I told him that every design document I have ever written for the last 15 years has had the Suikoden fortress [concept] in it. And it's always the first thing I have to cut! And he said, "Me too! You're the first person who's gotten the reference!"

So it was that kind of easy collaboration from the start. I told him yesterday that he reminds me of myself 30 years ago. It's crazy. I don't know if he would agree, but so far it's been great. He's got amazing ideas and a terrific team. I feel like I've sort of been able to plus his ideas and he's been able to plus some of mine. So it's been a close collaboration, and I think it's going to result in an interesting, unique game that's very different from the console versions. I think you kind of have to adapt your gameplay to the strengths of the device you're on. And DreamRift has been masterful at that top-screen/bottom-screen interaction. They do that better than anyone else.

We know you're not ready to spill the beans just yet, but is there any chance you can give us a little hint as to the nature of this new menace threatening Wasteland in The Power of Two?

Well, there are these new things out there called Blotworx that might play a role. But, really, the best answer I can give is just to say, "Things are seldom what they seem." You never know who you can trust....



This mystical cosmos is where Mickey retrieves his brush at the beginning of the game. Painting in all of the comets and asteroids will cause a Mickey-shaped constellation to appear, which you'll be able to see from other areas of the game.

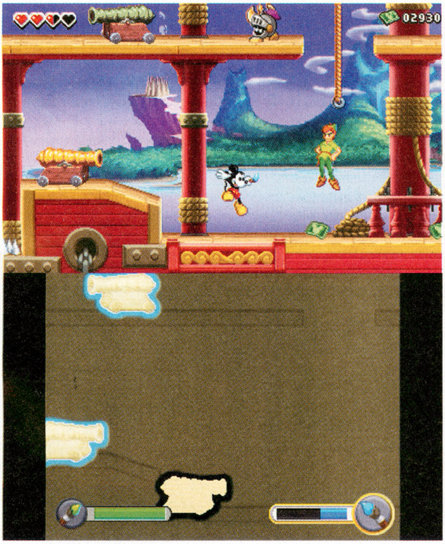
Disney Epic Mickey: Power of Illusion

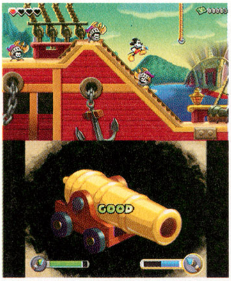
Just in case The Power of Two isn't enough to satisfy your inner Mouseketeer, Epic Mickey is also coming to the Nintendo 3DS. Under development at DreamRift—the studio responsible for last year's acclaimed Monster Tale—the handheld offering is a completely different experience from its console counterpart. "When we started talking to Disney, one of the first things they said, to our delight, was that they wanted something original," recalls DreamRift co-founder and Power of Illusion director Peter Ong. "They didn't just want a port of the Wii title. They wanted something that suited the Nintendo 3DS and took advantage of it in the fullest manner possible."

DreamRift's game is set in the established Epic Mickey universe and takes place sometime after the events of the original Wii game. But—in one of the most inspired and unexpected twists in recent memory—it also serves as a follow-up to 1990's beloved Castle of Illusion for the Sega Genesis. As Ong points out, Wasteland is a place for discarded elements of Disney history, so it only makes sense that the eponymous castle would end up there. Pulled along for the ride is the evil witch Mizrabel (the main villainess from the Genesis game), who's none too pleased with her new address. To get back to the toon world, she hatches a scheme that involves manifesting illusions of popular Disney characters within the castle and stealing their essences. A side effect of that process is that the illusions eventually draw the characters they mimic into the castle and trap them there. (We're not quite sure how that works, but then again, we're no sorcery experts.)

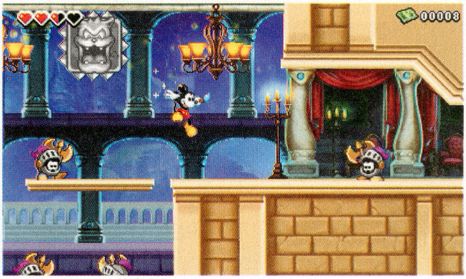
Meanwhile, Mickey is enjoying a lovely day in toon world when he hears that Minnie has been spotted at some mysterious castle that just materialized in Wasteland. Our hero doesn't know the particulars of the situation, but he rushes to the castle nonetheless. What follows is a platforming adventure that impressively melds its dual sources of inspiration. Castle of Illusion's DNA is readily apparent in the hand-drawn visuals and Mickey's familiar bounce attack. But the paint-and-thinner concept from Epic Mickey also plays a central role.

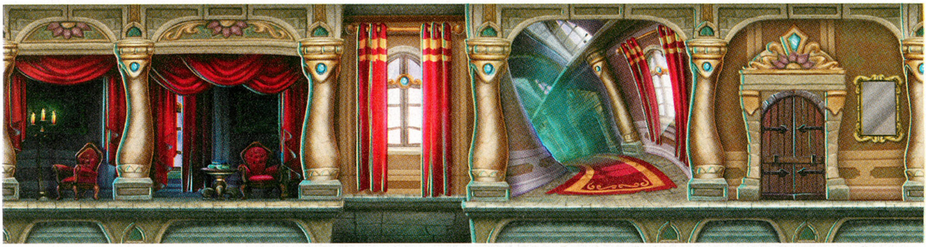
As you progress through each level, icons representing various objects—from cannons to floating platforms—appear on the bottom screen. By tapping an icon, you can pause the action and attempt to paint the object into existence or erase it from your path. Creating an object requires you to trace its outline with the stylus, and in some cases, the more precise you are, the better the results. If you paint a flawless cannon, for instance, its projectiles will damage only Mickey's foes while passing harmlessly through the mouse. If you do just an OK job, the cannonballs will pose a danger to everyone, and should you really mess things up, they'll hurt only Mickey. To erase something, you have to cover it completely with thinner (again via the stylus) before your meter runs dry, a task that involves speed more than precision. In addition, you'll earn sketches throughout the game





[Left] After you rescue certain characters, like Peter Pan here, they'll actually follow along and assist you through the rest of the level.





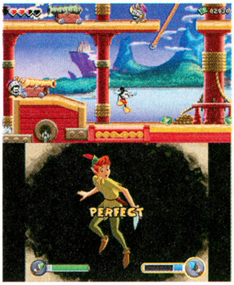
that allow you to create and place their corresponding objects as you see fit (though you can bring only a limited number of sketches into each level).

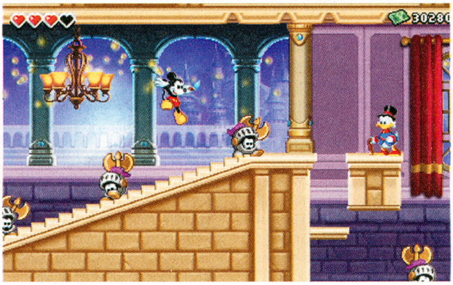
It's an interesting take on the Epic Mickey franchise's core mechanic, and one that plays to the strengths of both hardware and developer. Before creating Monster Tale, many of the folks at DreamRift—including Ong—worked on Henry Hatsworth in the Puzzling Adventure. This team has demonstrated a real knack for dual-screen gameplay, and judging by our early demo, they've got another winning concept on their hands.

MAGIC KINGDOMS

DreamRift's other great talent lies in crafting beautiful hand-drawn visuals, and Power of Illusion is no exception. The sprite work and animation are fantastic, and as with many 2D games on the N3DS, stereoscopic 3D brings an incredible sense of depth to the multilayered backgrounds. That last point may be what excites Ong most about Nintendo's newest handheld. "Being an old-school gamer, parallax scrolling basically pleases me more than any fancy graphic effect in any polygonal game I've ever seen," he exclaims. "And the way it's enhanced by stereoscopic 3D is just the greatest thing in the world to me when it comes to graphics."

[Below right] It's great to see Scrooge McDuck back in a video game. Now if only we could get a DuckTales sequel....



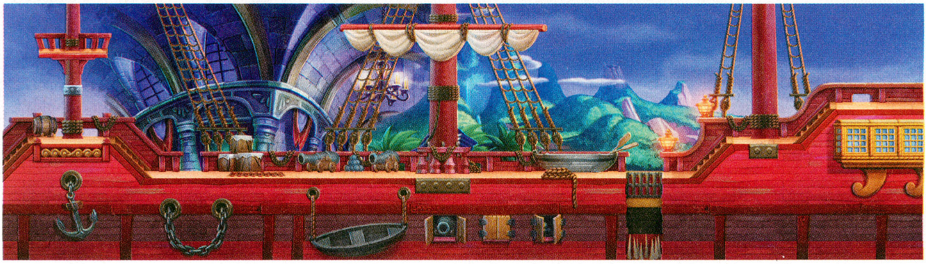


Lending the presentation even greater appeal is that every level is based on an animated Disney film. According to Ong, the stages will draw from Disney's full library—from classics like *Sleeping Beauty* to contemporary stuff like *Tangled* (though he's quick to point out that those specific examples may not make the cut). Most of our demo took place on *The Jolly Roger*—Captain Hook's ship from *Peter Pan*. Of course, it's all just an illusion—Mickey is inside the castle the entire time, and on occasion, you'll catch glimpses of its hallways and chambers through imperfections in the facade.

You'll also spot an assortment of famous Disney characters (or illusions of them, anyway). Some are in plain sight, whereas others are carefully hidden or need to be painted. Every character you manage to save will take up residence in a fortress that Mickey uses as his base of operations—a nod to the long-running RPG series Suikoden. "Warren and I have always been huge fans of the Suikoden games," says Ong. "It's funny; the first time I came down to meet him, I brought up the fortress idea and he immediately said, 'You know what? That sounds a hell of a lot like Suikoden.' And I said, 'That's exactly what the inspiration was for it!' It's something I've tried to get it into every game [I've made], and now we're finally doing it. And with the world's greatest library of characters, no less."

Between levels, you can return to Mickey's fortress and visit its occupants. Each has a room that starts out pretty barren, but the characters gradually upgrade their abodes as you complete side quests for them. Helping Scrooge McDuck find his lucky dime, for example, helps transform his room into a facsimile of the money bin's office from *DuckTales*. Beyond the aesthetic improvements, characters occasionally express their gratitude with practical rewards like new sketches or health-meter upgrades.

Epic Mickey meets Castle of Illusion *and* Suikoden; we didn't see that one coming. If what we've played thus far is any indication, though, the formula could prove as brilliant as it is unexpected.



Master of Illusion

DreamRift co-founder and creative director Peter Ong pulls back the curtain on his studio's latest project and discusses why it's been a dream come true.

NINTENDO POWER Where did the idea come from to create a follow-up to Castle of Illusion?

PETER ONG As a boy, my ritual was to beat Castle of Illusion on the Sega Genesis at least once every day. It was one of the most formative games (and even experiences) of my life. So much so that I've drawn upon Castle of Illusion with every game I've worked on throughout my career as a professional game designer for more than a decade. No matter what type of game or genre I've dealt with, there has always been a reason to refer to Castle of Illusion for research in the interest of making the best game possible. It feels as if I've been preparing to make [Power of Illusion] my whole life.

In terms of the levels, will there be any callbacks to Castle of Illusion? (We're especially partial to that lovely purple sunset in the third level.)

I love that sky in the third level as well! There is so much amazing imagery in the original game that we are drawing from for inspiration. Our goal is for people who played Castle of Illusion to feel a familiarity from the original game, while at the same time we would like to take the incredibly imaginative and artistic approach of the first game and explore it further in order to give a more intimate look inside the castle. Fortunately, our art director, Michael Veroni, is just as big of a fan of Castle of Illusion as I am.

Can you talk a little bit about the collaboration with Warren Spector and Junction Point on this project? How much back-and-forth is there and what kinds of feedback do they provide?

We have the utmost appreciation for the amount of trust that Warren, Disney, and Junction Point have placed in DreamRift by believing in our ability to make this a great game. I've dreamed of making a new game about the Castle of Illusion since I was a child, but being realistic, I had never dared to think that might actually happen. Now that I have miraculously been given that chance, I can't begin to convey how thankful I am to Disney.

Warren and the folks at Junction Point have been amazing to work with. The opportunity to connect with someone like Warren who has an enormous amount of experience in making games has allowed us to hit the ground running.

It has truly been a pleasure to share thoughts between both studios to the betterment of the games we are each working on. Although both are unique games that stand on their own, every chance that we have to correspond with each other leads to ideas that can make for a stronger game.

Will Oswald play a role in the game at all?

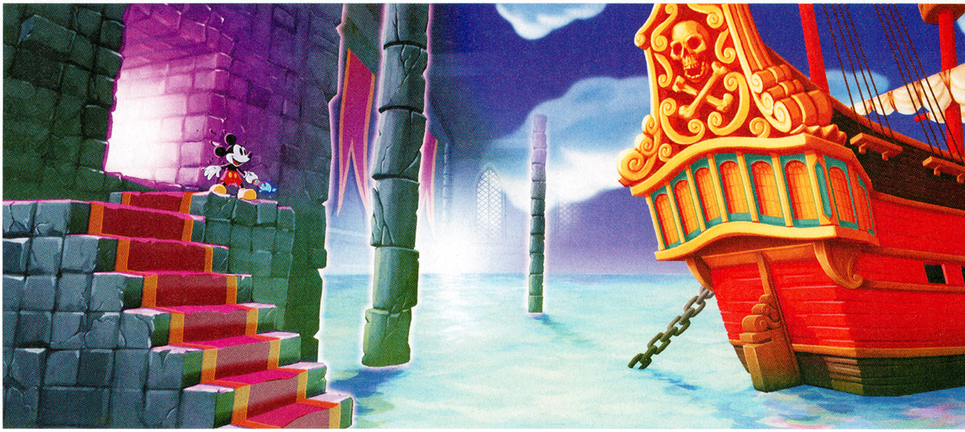
Oswald is responsible for calling Mickey back to Wasteland and setting him on his way into the Castle of Illusion at the beginning of our story. Oswald will be instrumental throughout the game in helping Mickey to complete his quest within the castle.

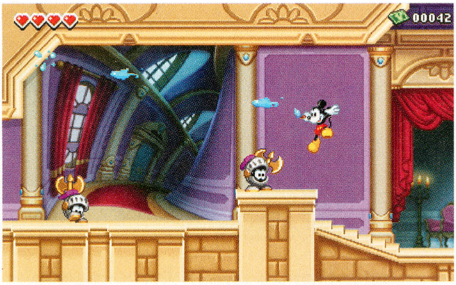
What lessons did you and your team take away from the development of Henry Hatsworth and Monster Tale that you've been able to apply to this project?

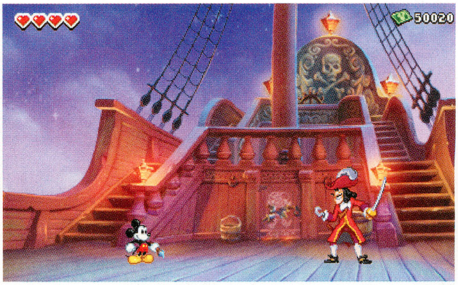
With both Hatsworth and Monster Tale, the core members of our team at DreamRift were able to explore the ability to create innovative gameplay mechanics that leveraged the two screens on Nintendo's handheld to a rare degree. With each of those games, we were faced with a healthy dose of external skepticism regarding the central gameplay mechanics because they were so unusual and utilized the hardware in a unique manner.

Having executed Monster Tale and Hatsworth to great critical and audience reception, it has allowed our team to approach a new game centered around yet another crazy gameplay concept with even more confidence. We are bringing the knowledge from our past games to make an experience on the N3DS that takes full advantage of the system.

What would you say are the biggest differences between







Mickey can fling paint and thinner at enemies as a projectile attack. Exactly what effect the different substances will have on foes is still to be determined.

working on those original IPs and an existing property like Epic Mickey? What are some of the unique challenges and opportunities involved with each?
Looking at our core team's past games, we've historically thrived on making original properties, and this is our first game within an existing universe. We always knew it would take something special for DreamRift to tackle an existing property for the first time, and this partnership with Disney happens to be the perfect situation for us to do so.

The biggest differences we've encountered between working on an original property and an existing universe are the prior awareness of the property by the audience, and the need to maintain the integrity of a pre-existing universe. Both of these factors can be perceived as either a positive or negative aspect of game creation based on how they are dealt with.

After we finished making Monster Tale, I had a discussion with our co-founder and technical director, Ryan Pijai, regarding what we'd like to make next. Based on that conversation, we excitedly rolled straight into prototyping a system for the N3DS that allows the player to paint objects on the bottom screen, which then change into beautiful images that become an interactive part of your gameplay environment. We were very interested in making a game with that central mechanic, even though we hadn't yet discussed it with anyone outside of DreamRift.

From our first discussions with Disney regarding bringing the Disney Epic Mickey universe to the N3DS, it was immediately clear to DreamRift that this was a one-in-a-million kind of opportunity...where the property you're dealing with actually enhances and elevates a gameplay design to the next level. We realized that in a game which focuses on having the player take part in the process of creating art, that activity becomes much stronger when the player is painting something that he or she already has a strong connection with. Disney's library of the most universally beloved characters, stories, and environments makes for such a serendipitous combination with DreamRift's game-design sensibilities that we sometimes have to pinch ourselves to remind us that this opportunity isn't too good to be true.

Your team obviously has an affinity for 2D side-scrollers (as do we). What is it about making those types of games that appeals to you?
There's something about 2D-perspective gameplay that's very appealing to us as game-makers. I really enjoy the directness in these types of games, with which it's possible to explore pure game design. At DreamRift we have a love for classic games, and we also believe that the principles found within those games can be applied to do so much more. We want to evolve games further to make new experiences rather than replicate the past.

What's the process for choosing which Disney films you'll turn into levels for Power of Illusion?
This has been one of the most difficult things for us to do, but what a nice problem it is to have! We wish we could do them all! In choosing which Disney films to represent in the game, DreamRift's goal is to achieve a good range across the different eras of Disney, from early classics all the way up to cherished modern hits. We believe it's important to honor the full range of Disney's rich history of masterpieces.

What are your plans for boss battles in the game?
One might guess from our prior games that we absolutely love doing boss battles! The bosses in Power of Illusion will use attacks involving illusions in a surprising manner. In each boss encounter, the player will go head-to-head with a familiar Disney villain courtesy of Mizrabel's power over illusion.

Will the soundtrack be unique to Power of Illusion? If so, who's composing it and what approach are they taking?
I can't mention who is composing it yet, but the soundtrack will draw inspiration heavily from the musical approach found in Castle of Illusion and the Disney Epic Mickey universe, while also capturing the feel of the respective classic Disney environments.

Do you have any plans to take advantage of the system's StreetPass or SpotPass functionality?
We don't have any information to share at this time.

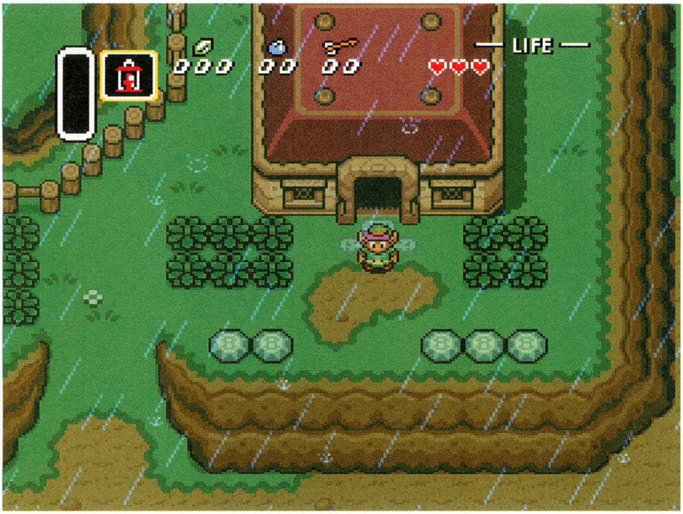
Finally, is there anything else you'd like our readers to know about the game?
All of us at DreamRift consider the chance to make Disney Epic Mickey: Power of Illusion to be the absolute highest honor and privilege. We can only hope that our immense passion and commitment to the game will come across to those who play it, and that some part of the joy we felt playing the original Castle of Illusion is captured.

The STRONGEST LINK

Twenty years after its North American release, here are 20 reasons why **The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past** just might be the best Zelda game ever.

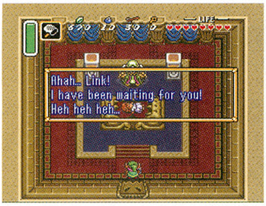
When it comes to Nintendo's Legend of Zelda series, everybody has their personal favorites. Many stand by The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time as the best entry—we've even made that assertion in this magazine on multiple occasions. Many consider Link's latest outing, The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword, to be the pinnacle of the franchise, while others cite The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask for its unique three-day cycle or the original NES game for starting it all. In short, there are pretty good reasons why any Zelda game could be deemed the best. But as we were playing Super NES classic The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past to celebrate 20 years since its North American release, we noticed that the case for it taking the cake is awfully strong. To commemorate those two decades since the debut of one of the 16-bit era's greatest titles, here are our top 20 reasons The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past could be considered the best Zelda game of them all.

BY **CHRIS HOFFMAN**

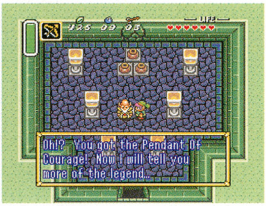


1. The Rainstorm

The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past opens amidst an ominous downpour that immediately establishes a mysterious and melancholy mood. Despite the technological limitations of the era, the pitter-patter of the rain, the crashing of thunder, and the splashing of droplets on the screen made the rainstorm seem so real that it gave us goosebumps back in the day—and, to be honest, it still does now.



Ahah... Link!
I have been waiting for you!
Heh heh heh...



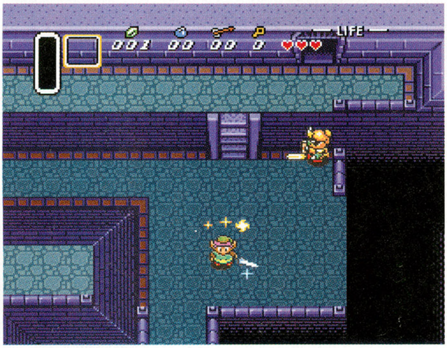
Oh!? You got the Pendant Of
Courage! Now I will tell you
more of the legend...

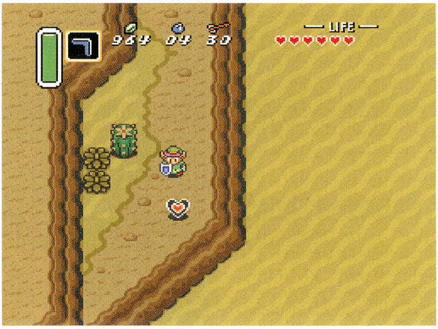
2. An Emphasis on Storytelling

Certainly, previous Zelda games had stories to them, but A Link to the Past took the narrative to new heights. Characters are full of personality and have plenty to say, and there are plot-driven reasons for Link to venture all over Hyrule, collecting pendants and rescuing maidens. Eventful twists, character deaths, and the first hint of Ganon's backstory really make A Link to the Past feel like the legend it was meant to be.

3. Spin Attack

Link's spinning sword attack is just plain fun. No magic meters or 360-degree joystick spins are required—just briefly hold and release the attack button and you get one of the most useful and enjoyable techniques in Zelda series history.



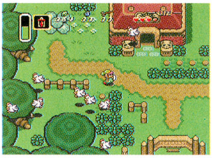


4. Pieces of Heart

There have always been health-extending goodies to find and collect in the Zelda series, but the Pieces of Heart introduced in A Link to the Past really provide an excuse to search every nook and cranny of Hyrule. With 24 pieces in all (18 in the Light World and 6 in the Dark World), the sense of reward through exploration was taken to new heights, and the concept has lived on in nearly every subsequent Zelda game.

5. Environmental Interactions ▶

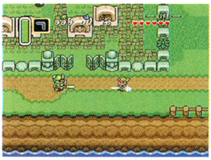
Numerous little touches really pull you into the world of A Link to the Past. Though they seem simple, being able to pick up pots, chop down shrubs, wade through shallow water, and trudge through waist-high swamplands (among other actions) add a subtle yet powerful realism to Link's adventure.



▲

6. Killer Cuccos

Did I really just see Link get defeated by a swarm of Cuccos? It's very possible. This is the game that taught Zelda players the hazards of poultry abuse. If you don't know it's coming, it's highly surprising—yet wildly entertaining—to see Link get assaulted by the chickenlike birds if you make them feel your blade one time too many. The trend of penalizing gamers for such unnecessary roughness continued in other Zelda games, but it started here.



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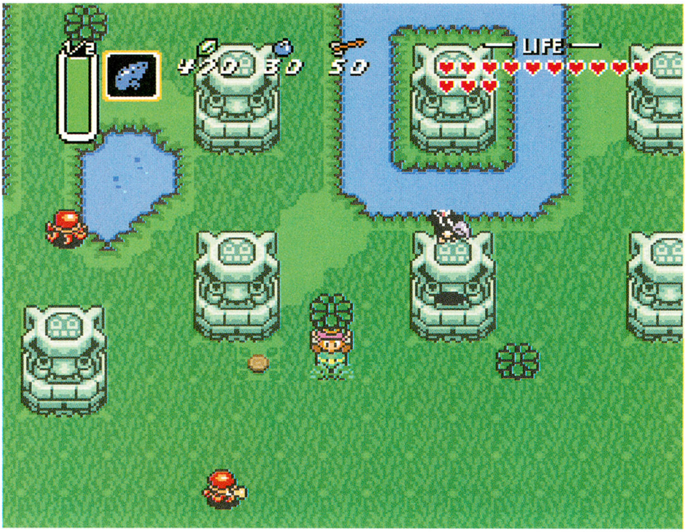
7. Pegasus Shoes

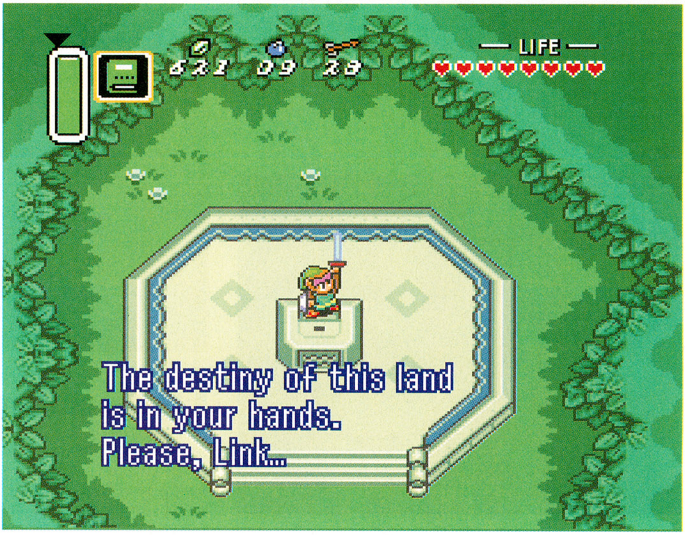
The "putt-putt-putt" sound effect and telltale clouds of dust can mean only one thing—Link's got his Pegasus Shoes on and you'd best get out of his way. Admittedly, summoning the bird with Link's flute is a faster way to travel, but it's not nearly as satisfying as charging up the Pegasus Shoes and plowing through every enemy and plant in sight. The footwear can even be used to smash certain walls. We're still waiting to see the Pegasus Shoes make the jump to a polygonal Zelda title.



8. The Introduction of the Master Sword

A Link to the Past was a game of many Zelda firsts, including the initial appearance of the Master Sword (at least by that name). The sword of evil's bane has gone on to become a crucial story element in many subsequent Zelda games, and when you obtain the powerful blade in A Link to the Past you can practically feel its power resonating through the controller. Furthermore, the scene in which Link attains the sword—highlighted by forest animals scurrying out of the way as Link approaches the weapon, and mist dissipating from the Lost Woods once he pulls it from its resting place—is both beautiful and memorable.

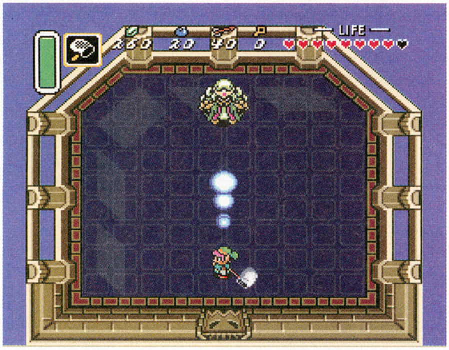
▼



The destiny of this land
is in your hands.
Please, Link...

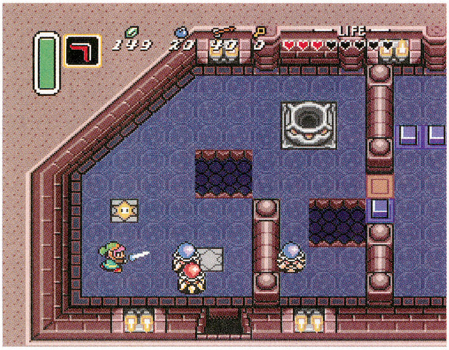
9. Fighting Agahnim with the Net

The Zelda series is full of little Easter eggs and neat tricks. One of our favorites (and one of the earliest) is the ability to deflect the evil sorcerer Agahnim's attacks back at him—and thus defeat him—using Link's bug-catching net. If you're an evil mastermind with magical powers and ambitions for world domination, there can't be many things more embarassing than that!



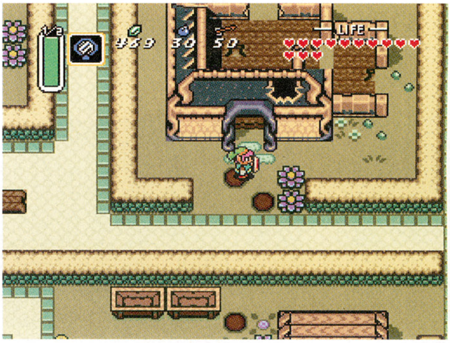
10. A Perfect Mix of Puzzles and Combat

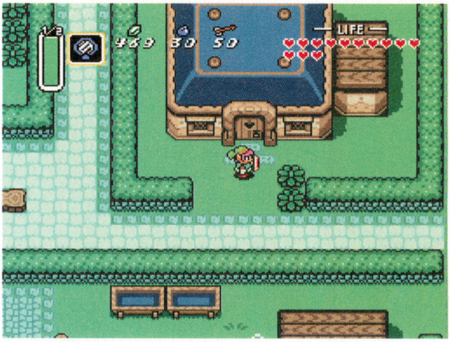
Brain-teasing puzzles and sword-swinging combat are essential parts of the Zelda experience, but A Link to the Past, arguably, balances those two components better than any other game in the series. The mix is close to flawless, especially in locales such as the Eastern Palace, the Tower of Hera, and Turtle Rock. It probably has a lot to do with the classic overhead perspective; since you can easily see Link's surroundings at all times, you can quickly and effortlessly move between fighting foes, pushing blocks, activating switches, and the like.



12. Bunny Link

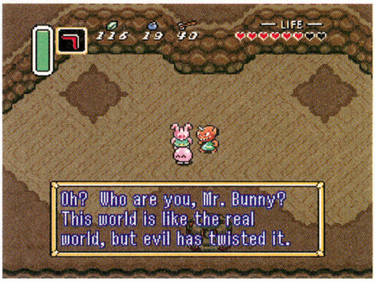
The first time you wander into the Dark World, you find that Link has been transformed into a helpless bunny! Admittedly, it's not so great to temporarily lose all your abilities, but *he's just so darn cute*!



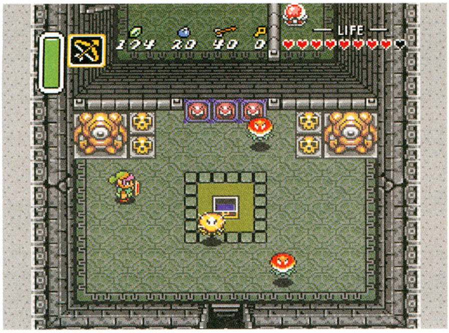


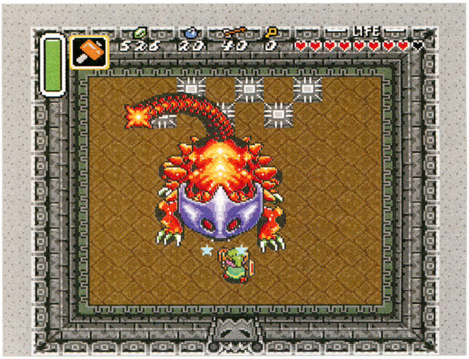
11. Worlds of Light and Dark

Exploring one world is fun, but exploring two is amazing. In the first of many innovative gameplay hooks in the series, A Link to the Past allows players to jump back and forth between the regular Light World version of Hyrule and a sinister Dark World version. Not only is it just plain cool to see how the two worlds differ—such as discovering that the Light World's serene Kakariko Village has been replaced by the Dark World's Village of Outcasts—but clever differences in the layout of each world allow players to warp from one to the other (and back again) to reach new areas and uncover secrets. The result is one of the series's most useful, involving, and compelling play mechanics.



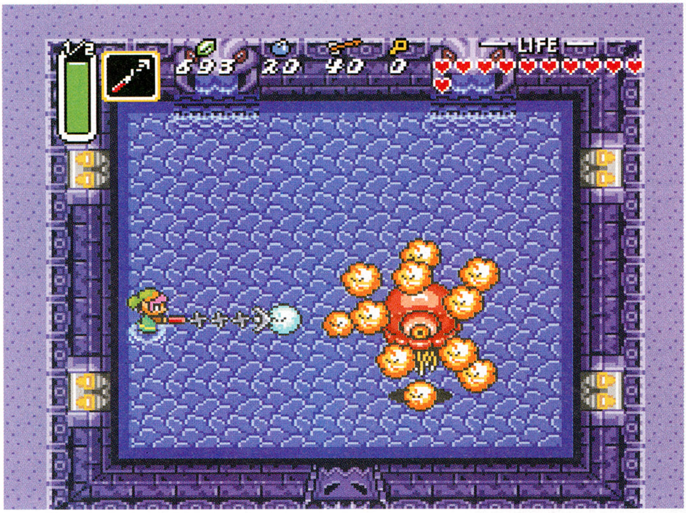
Oh? Who are you, Mr. Bunny?
This world is like the real
world, but evil has twisted it.





13. Palace of Darkness

Almost every dungeon in A Link to the Past is enjoyable to play, but the Palace of Darkness is possibly the best. Despite being the first dungeon Link encounters in the Dark World, it's full of tricky obstacles (including teleportation tiles, sealed passages, unlit rooms, and retractable barriers) and boasts an interesting multitiered design. The battle against the boss, the Helmasaur King, is pretty intense.



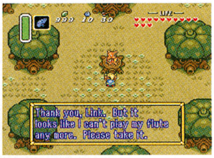
14. The Hookshot

The Zelda series is full of cool items, but our all-time favorite has to be the Hookshot, which was introduced in A Link to the Past. Not only does it let Link clear wide gaps and grab distant items, but it can be used as a powerful offensive weapon. The Hookshot makes the boss battle against Arrghus (which takes place in the dungeon where you acquire the Hookshot) especially satisfying, as you use the device to pull apart Arrghus's protective barrier and hack it to pieces.

15. The Music

As is typical for the series, A Link to the Past has a fantastic soundtrack. The Super NES's enhanced audio capabilities were harnessed to put a rousing twist on Koji Kondo's ever-catchy Legend of Zelda overworld theme, but perhaps the game's greatest musical contribution was the introduction of "Zelda's Lullaby" and "Great Fairy's Fountain Theme" (which is also encountered on the file-select screen). Both pieces have gone on to become recurring classics, and we can't imagine the Zelda series without them.

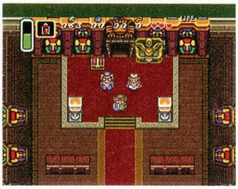
298 15 30
LIFE



Thank you, Link. But it looks like I can't play my flute any more. Please take it.

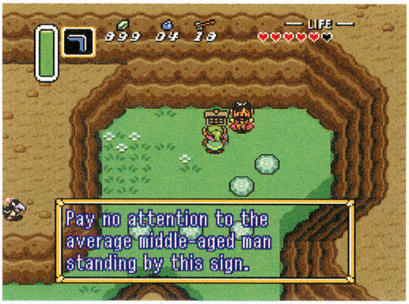
16. Flute Boy

Though generally adventurous and fun, A Link to the Past has its emotionally poignant moments as well. One of the most powerful is when you unexpectedly encounter a flute-playing boy who's been trapped in the Dark World; he sends you on a short quest to recover his instrument, but as soon as you bring it back to him, the lad evidently passes away as the Dark World's influence transforms him into a tree. Left holding the flute, it's up to Link to bring the sad news to the boy's father.



17. Timeless Visuals

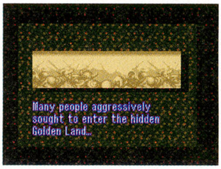
As much as we like the Zelda games, we have to admit that some of them, visually speaking, withstand the test of time better than others. (For example, we were quite happy to see Ocarina of Time get a graphical upgrade last year.) But thanks to its highly detailed hand-drawn sprite-based graphics, A Link to the Past has a charm that makes it nearly as impressive to look at today as it was two full decades ago.



Pay no attention to the average middle-aged man standing by this sign.

18. The Average Middle-Aged Man

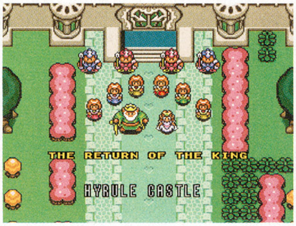
When you see a guy in the wilderness sitting next to a sign that tells you to leave him alone, you really don't have any choice but to try to get his attention, do you? When you do so—which is accomplished by messing with the sign—the supposedly "average middle-aged man" follows you around until you leave the area. Though this seems like nothing more than quirky fun at first, you eventually learn that this weirdo actually serves a gameplay purpose.

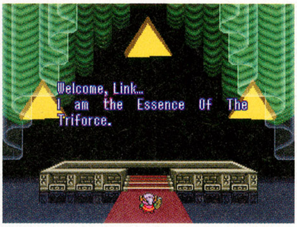


Many people aggressively sought to enter the hidden Golden Land...

19. The Mythology of the Golden Land

The Golden Land—a magical parallel dimension that houses the Triforce—is a pretty inspired idea. The Golden Land mirrors the heart of whoever holds the sacred artifact, which means it is a paradise when the Triforce is in the hands of someone pure, but it becomes warped and twisted when the Triforce is under the control of one with evil motives. Though the Golden Land (also known as the Sacred Realm) appears in later games, this is the only one in which it's fully explorable.





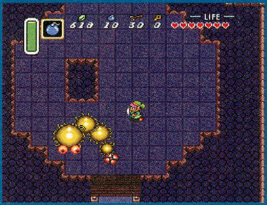
Welcome, Link... I am the Essence Of The Triforce.

20. The Ending

The ending of A Link to the Past is, quite simply, one of the happiest and most fulfilling finales we've ever seen. True, there's something to be said about the sad, emotional, or dramatic moments from the endings of other Zelda games, but it's quite gratifying to see Hyrule restored to its former glory and so many tragic fates reversed. Sit back, relax, and enjoy—you've earned it.

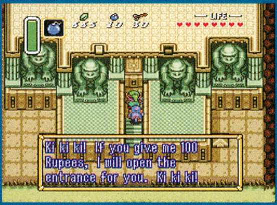
ON THE OTHER HAND

On the last few pages you've seen 20 good reasons why The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past might be the best Zelda game ever. For argument's sake, here are three reasons why it might not be.



1. FIGHTING THE GIANT MOLDORM

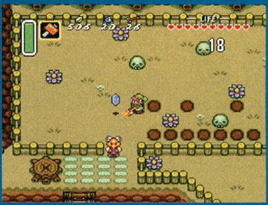
Getting defeated by a boss is unpleasant. But getting knocked into a pit and having to restart the boss fight is just plain annoying. And that can happen—over and over again—if you're not careful while fighting the giant Moldorm in the game's third dungeon, the Tower of Hera.



Ki ki ki! If you give me 100 Rupees, I will open the entrance for you. Ki ki ki!

2. PAYING THE MONKEY

Normally if you want to get someplace in a Zelda game you have to rely on your items and your wits to find the proper route. But shortly after entering the Dark World, you encounter a door that can be unlocked only by paying Kiki the moneygrubbing monkey. Not only is it unintuitive by Zelda standards, but Kiki's fees—which run you a minimum of 110 Rupees—are tantamount to robbery.



3. THE DIGGING MINIGAME

It seems like every Zelda game has one Piece of Heart that's a real pain to get. In A Link to the Past, it's the one obtained via the digging game in the Village of Outcasts. The location of the Piece of Heart is completely random, and although you may dig it up quickly, chances are you'll have to play the minigame many, many times—at 80 Rupees per attempt, at that.

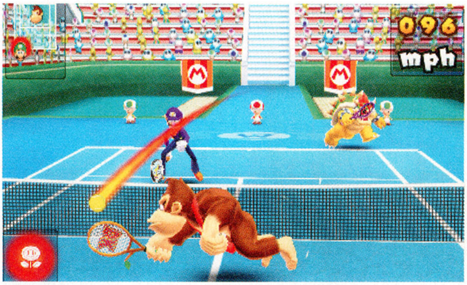
Making a Racket

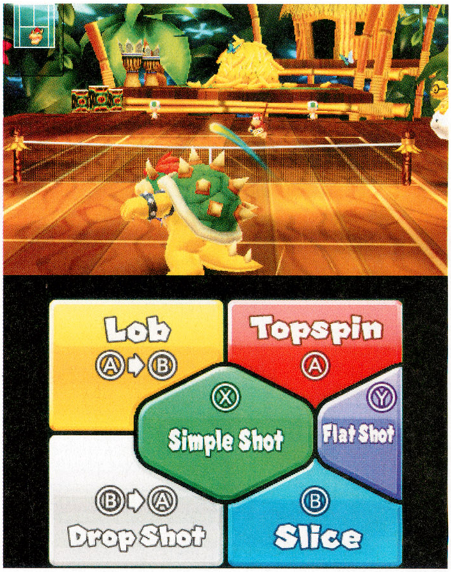
It's game, set, and match when Mario and friends return to the courts in Mario Tennis Open for Nintendo 3DS.

BY PHIL THEOBALD

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO DEVELOPER: CAMELOT RELEASE: MAY 2012

N3DS

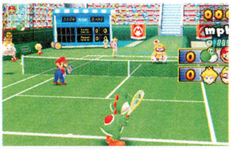




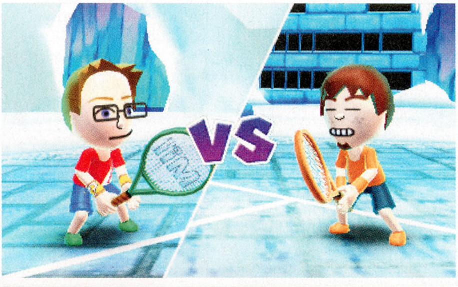
MARIO TENNIS games have appeared on many of Nintendo's recent systems, but the series has actually been around since 1995, when Mario's Tennis debuted on Virtual Boy. The main draw of that original game was its 3D graphics, so it's appropriate to see the series return to its roots, so to speak, with this upcoming release for the Nintendo 3DS handheld. Of course, in-your-face visuals aren't all that Mario Tennis Open has to offer. Nintendo is going to great lengths to make sure this title delivers a rich multiplayer experience and is just as accessible for beginners as for tennis pros.

The game itself is, well, tennis. You know how the sport goes—after all, people have been smacking balls back and forth on the screen since electronic games were invented. There are two main single-player modes to choose from: Tournament and Exhibition. In Tournament mode, you play your way up the bracket by competing against computer opponents until you reach the championships. Keep winning and you'll open up new and more-challenging cups. Exhibition mode is perfect for when you simply want to play a quick game. You choose your character and a court, decide on your opponent, select the number of sets and games you wish to play, and off you go. Both of these modes can be enjoyed in singles and doubles play; in the latter, the computer controls your partner in addition to your two opponents.

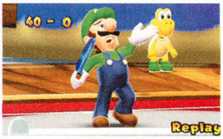
Performing well requires you to take advantage of the various shots available to you. Shots such as a lob, a drop shot, and a slice all vary in effectiveness depending on the situation, and if you charge your shot (by holding down the proper button) before you swing, your return volley will have more "oomph" behind it. If you don't want to worry about which shot to use, however, you can press the X Button to execute a "simple shot," which automatically selects



15 - 30
Replay



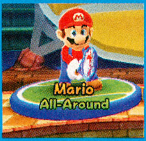
Playing as Mario and his pals is cool and all, but the stakes always feel higher when you're playing as yourself.



SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

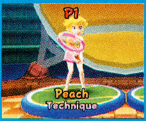
The Pros

There are 13 characters available at the start of Mario Tennis Open. Each one has a special attribute that will affect how you play as him or her. The information here will help you pick the character that's best for you.


Mario
All-Around

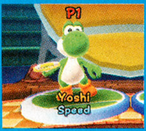
ALL-AROUND

Beginners will want to start with these characters. They have no particular strengths or weaknesses, but they're well-balanced and easy to control.
EXAMPLES: Mario, Luigi


P1
Peach
Technique

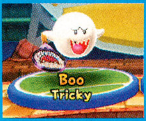
TECHNIQUE

These characters have great control over the ball, allowing them to easily hit it to the back of the court, where it is difficult to return.
EXAMPLES: Peach, Daisy


P1
Yoshi
Speed

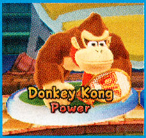
SPEED

If you want to get to the ball fast, these are the guys to choose. They're not particularly strong, but they can move around the court with ease.
EXAMPLES: Yoshi, Diddy Kong



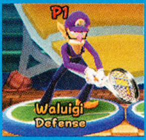
TRICKY

Skilled players can make good use of these characters. Their ability to hit wild curve shots can confuse unprepared opponents.
EXAMPLES: Boo, Bowser Jr.


Donkey Kong
Power

POWER

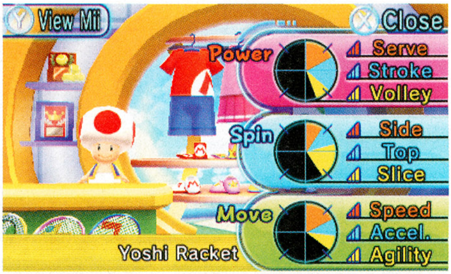
These are the "big guys," and as you might imagine, they're plenty strong. They'll send the ball flying back to your opponent.
EXAMPLES: Donkey Kong, Wario, Bowser


P1
Waluigi
Defense

DEFENSE

As a defensive player, Waluigi can reach balls that would be out of range for other characters. It's tough to sneak a shot past his lanky limbs.
EXAMPLES: Waluigi

In addition to the many Mario-universe characters, you can choose to play as your Mii. This personalized character doesn't have any predefined skills, so it's up to your natural abilities to win the cup.


View Mii
Close
Power
Serve
Stroke
Volley
Spin
Side
Top
Slice
Move
Speed
Accel.
Agility
Yoshi Racket

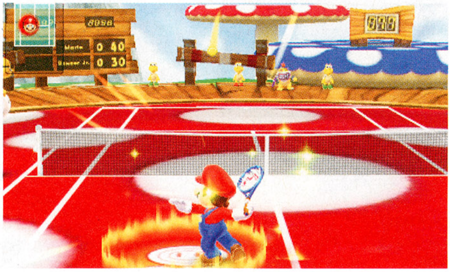
[Above] You'll need to employ some strategy when playing any Mario Tennis title, but now it helps to take stat-changing items into account.

StreetPass Match
Phil
Chester
Select a Mii to play with.
NEW
Chester

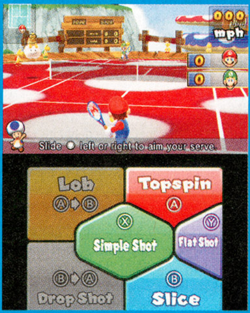
the best shot type. In addition, colored circles called Chance Areas often appear on the court when the ball is coming your way. If you position yourself on the Chance Area and use the type of swing that corresponds to the circle's color, your swing will be much more effective.

Before you hit the court, however, you'll need to decide how you want to play the game. As this is the first Mario Tennis title for a touch-screen game system, Nintendo has provided tactile controls designed for younger players and those who have not yet experienced such a fast-paced sports game. The touch-screen controls (dubbed the Shot Panel) are very easy to understand. The screen is divided into different-colored sections, each one labeled with a shot type. A quick tap is all you need to make your character swing his or her racket. Of course, if you're a traditionalist, you can still perform all of the shots with the system's face buttons.

To go along with the new touch-screen controls is a gameplay enhancement that takes advantage


Mario 0 40
Bowser Jr. 0 30

The Shot Panel



There are three different variations of the Shot Panel. The two basic configurations—identical except for the button layout—allow right- and left-handed players to choose the layout that works best for them. Young players and beginners will probably want to start with one of the basic setups, which provide three shots to choose from—the simple shot, the lob, and the drop shot. This trio provides a good amount of versatility, allowing you to effectively return the ball no matter where your opponent is positioned. After honing your skills with these shots, you can move up to the advanced Shot Panel, which is divided into six segments. The new shots provided here—topspin, flat shot, and slice—will make your returns less predictable, putting you at an advantage.

of the N3DS system's gyro sensor. Holding the system flat forces the camera into a mostly overhead view of the court—typical for tennis games. If you put the N3DS in a vertical position, though, the camera shifts behind your character. From this point of view, you can aim your shots by simply moving the system left and right. While playing in this Dynamic View mode, your character will automatically run to where the ball is approaching, leaving you free to choose your shot and aim it properly. Not having to worry about reaching the ball means casual players will especially benefit from this mode. It's also worth mentioning that the N3DS automatically turns off its 3D capabilities while in Dynamic View, as the frequent movement of the system would disrupt the stereoscopic effect.

As much fun as the Mario Tennis series is to play solo, it's even better with a group of friends. Luckily, Mario Tennis Open has lots of multiplayer options. Two players can compete in singles matches, and up to four can join in for a doubles contest. In addition to the standard local multiplayer, Mario Tennis Open supports Download Play, so friends can get involved even if they don't own the game. There is also the ability to play online for the first time in the series. You can opt to take on people from your Friend List, of course, but you'll also be able to do single-player online matchmaking and compare your performance with others on the leaderboard. There's even StreetPass functionality: Passing by other people who have played Mario Tennis Open will cause their Mii characters to visit your game. When they do, you'll be able to play a quick match against a CPU-controlled version of them.

With its innovative control options and extensive multiplayer offerings, Mario Tennis Open should appeal to just about everyone. There are even special tennis-themed challenges that you can indulge in when you want to take a break from the regular action. We've always enjoyed the Mario Tennis series, and we're excited to finally take our game online when Mario Tennis Open arrives later this spring.

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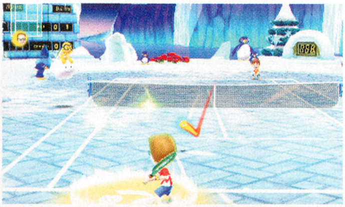
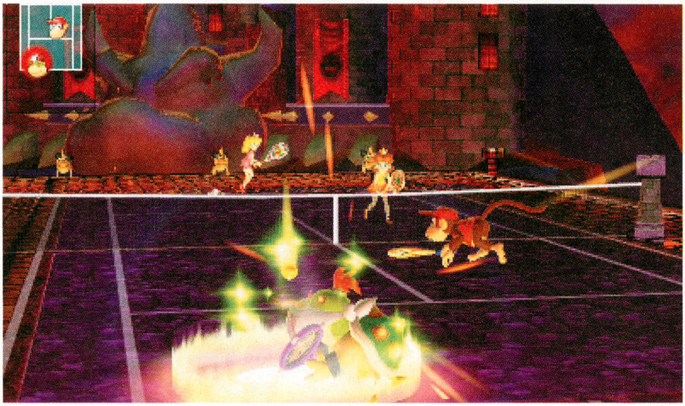
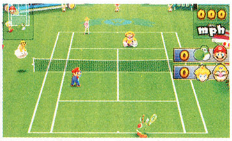
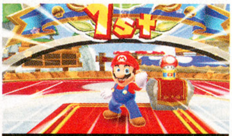






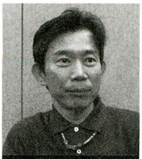


Mushroom Cup
You win!

SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

Tennis Masters

To learn more about the creation of Mario Tennis Open, we went right to the source: the game's producer and lead designer, Hiroyuki Takahashi of Camelot, and co-producer Toshiharu Izuno of Nintendo. The pair answered our questions so deftly that we're convinced they would make great doubles partners.


Hiroyuki Takahashi

Toshiharu Izuno

NINTENDO POWER What was your underlying philosophy in designing Mario Tennis Open when compared to previous Mario Tennis titles?

HIROYUKI TAKAHASHI The theme for this installment is "Back to Basics." The first game in the [main, post-Virtual Boy] series, Mario Tennis for the Nintendo 64, captured what was fundamentally interesting about tennis. Then, in the GameCube version, it transformed into a more Mario-flavored version of tennis that fans of the Mario series could enjoy. For this game, while we did build off of some aspects of the GameCube version, our goal was to go back and capture the core essence of the Nintendo 64 version. Of course, when I say "back to basics," I don't mean that we've simply reverted to the style of the Nintendo 64 version; I mean that we've built off of that style to make for an even more enjoyable tennis experience.

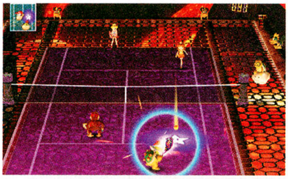
TOSHIHARU IZUNO Our first request to Camelot was that they try to make the gameplay feel closer to the Nintendo 64 version of Mario Tennis in aspects like character controls and the way the game employed the core tactics of tennis. We also asked that they use the controls of the Nintendo 3DS to make for a game that even new players could intuitively pick up and play, and to make a competitive experience that anyone could enjoy. I think [this interview] will provide a good understanding of the ways in which we approached these challenges during the creation of the game.

Why did you decide to offer touch-screen controls for choosing shots? Do you feel that this might make the game too easy for experienced players?

HT: Advanced players may feel that the game controls have been simplified to some extent. But we didn't want moves like lobs and drop shots to be available only to players who had mastered the controls—we wanted everyone to be able to use them. I think that by making these shots easier to use, we've made it possible for anyone to challenge highly skilled gamers.

At what point in the game's development did you decide to incorporate gyro controls?

HT: Drawing out the charms of the hardware is something that I consider to be a duty of developers in positions like ours. And so, when we develop software for the N3DS, we explore all sorts of possibilities. The gyro sensor proved to be one of the most effective. Of course, it took a great deal of effort to get the gyro controls to where they are now.



What advantages do you feel the gyro controls offer over traditional controls?

HT: I think they provide a new gameplay experience, and one that feels more like being a real tennis player. Also, when you play with the gyro controls, it's easier to shoot for the corners.

There have been a few Mario Tennis titles now. What are the challenges in making a new entry in the series feel fresh without straying too far from the original concept?

HT: As I mentioned before, the Nintendo 64 version was simple, while the GameCube version offered a much more entertaining experience. That was a change that we liked, but it's hard not to wonder if maybe we focused a little too much on making it entertaining.... That by making that aspect so prominent, we lost sight of what made tennis inherently interesting as a sport.

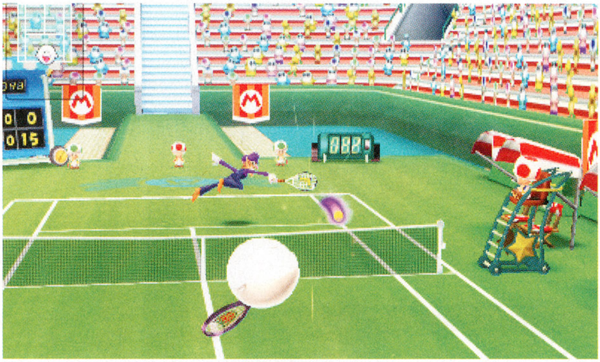
If you play Mario Tennis Open, I think you'll feel that the experience we've gained from developing those games has been put to good use. I believe we've succeeded at drawing on the strengths of the past Mario Tennis games, and matching those strengths to the hardware features of the N3DS.

Considering the two different views in the game—dynamic and traditional—is there one that you hope that players will use more often? Why?

HT: Since players are able to seamlessly switch between the Top View and Dynamic View modes, my hope is that instead of committing to one or the other, players will instead switch between them as best fits their needs and play style.

TI: When you hold the hardware vertically, you play with gyro controls and the dynamic camera. Set the unit horizontally again, and you can play in Top View mode with the Circle Pad. So it's not just the perspective; you can also change the control scheme midmatch. I hope players will put both modes to good use.

This is the first Mario Tennis title to incorporate online play. What challenges did you face



when introducing an online mode? How did you overcome these challenges?

HT: It requires a great deal of effort to develop online-play modes. They're also difficult to debug, and it elongates the entire development schedule. Since we were developing the overseas versions of the game at basically the same time, the schedule ended up growing even longer. While of course the development staff worked hard to make everything happen, the directing staff shouldered the heaviest burden.

When developing a game with such a strong online component, how do you ensure that the experience is just as involving for those who will play only single-player mode?

HT: I think the online and StreetPass modes provide a good sense of the breadth of the game all by themselves, and I hope that a great many players will choose to experience them. Of course, we strived to make sure that players could get plenty of enjoyment out of the single-player content as well. There's plenty of unlockable content, like new costumes, that should make the single-player mode a fulfilling experience.

Are you concerned about balance issues when playing online if one player is using touch-screen controls while the other is using traditional controls?

HT: It will probably be the newest players who will feel most comfortable with the touch-screen controls, while the longtime Mario Tennis fans will be more used to the button controls. So ultimately, I expect that the different control schemes will allow both types of players to compete against each other on a more level playing field.

What challenges are there in creating a sports game that will appeal to people who don't normally play sports games?

HT: This is something we've been wrestling with ever since we developed Mario Golf. For example, in my case, I've been playing sports like golf, tennis, and baseball since way back. So as a player of sports games, I'm always dissatisfied when I play games where I feel that I'm unable to put my real-world sports skills to use.

There are all sorts of categories of people who don't usually play sports games. There are people like me who play real sports, people who like watching sports but aren't good at playing them, and so on. We want our sports games to be played by as many people as possible, and strive to make our games be the ones that transform casual players into true game fans. Achieving that requires a great deal of trial and error in aspects of the game design such as the interface. That's something we're always working on, and we will continue to do so in the future.

Is there an equivalent to the Power Shots from Mario Power Tennis in this game?

HT: There's a shot you might call a "mini Power Shot." By delivering a well-timed shot with either your own hit or the Chance Areas that appear as the game progresses, it's possible to unleash a decisive shot.

TI: The equivalent is the back-and-forth of a high-speed rally. And we hope you'll enjoy the exhilarating feeling of the remade powered-up-shot mechanic.

In the past, portable Mario Tennis titles have featured an involved, RPG-style single-player mode. Why does this game not feature such a mode?

HT: This version may be for a handheld system, but we approached it like a console title. With aspects like download matches and online matches made possible by the hardware, the game has a feature set more similar to console games.

Another reason is that the game's cast includes Mii characters in addition to characters from the Mario family, which are difficult to work into an [RPG] scenario. It didn't feel right to have already-existent Mii characters appear in an original storyline.

But there are RPG-like elements in the form of costumes. I hope people will enjoy collecting the various costumes to customize their own characters and expand their abilities.

Are there any advantages that developing games for the Nintendo 3DS platform offers over developing for Nintendo DS or Wii?

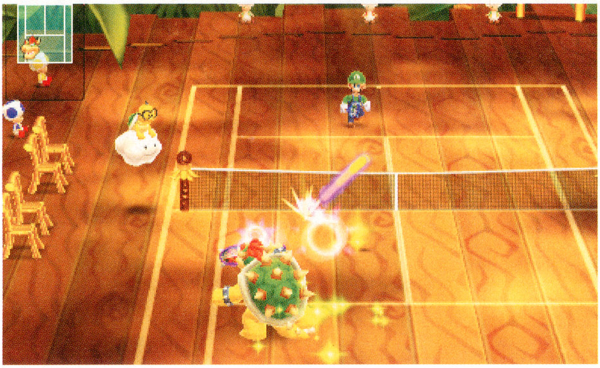
TI: I would say the biggest is the platform's impressively well-realized ability to bring people together. It supports StreetPass at the hardware level, and its Mii and friend functionality work beautifully with the game's online modes. And of course, the stereoscopic 3D is quite effective at allowing players to feel immersed in the game and judge the position of the ball.

How do you decide which characters should be included in the game, both as the default characters and the hidden characters?

TI: We consider this internally at Nintendo, and then explore various options with Camelot before making a final decision. There are some characters who are only introduced as you progress through the game, so please look forward to that.

If you could introduce another Nintendo character (not from the Mario universe) into Mario Tennis Open, who would it be? Why?

HT: Characters from the Pokémon series, like Pikachu, might be a good fit. I think that might be a good way to get new players interested in the game.



SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

NINTENDO 3DS: THE FIRST-YEAR REPORT

It's been a wild, fun-filled year for the **Nintendo 3DS**. We evaluate the system's performance since its debut last spring.

BY **RANDY NELSON & CHRIS HOFFMAN**

What a difference a year makes. A little over 12 months ago the Nintendo 3DS system was released in North America, and while it took the stereoscopic-3D handheld some time to find its footing, all indications point to the system being a worthy follow-up to the Nintendo DS. In fact, the N3DS recently shot past the 4.5-million-sold mark in the United States—that's nearly double what the DS sold in its first year. To commemorate the occasion, we're taking a look back at the highs (and lows) of the system's first year and evaluating how the N3DS has performed in nine key categories. Without further ado, let's see how Nintendo's newest portable fared.

First-Party Support

After launching with Nintendo-published offerings that included nintendogs + cats, Pilotwings Resort, and Steel Diver, the N3DS went without a release from the Big N itself for three whole months. The drought was finally broken in June by The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D; most gamers can agree that the remake of the classic Nintendo 64 adventure was given new life in stereoscopic 3D—and that it brought new life to the N3DS system.

It was another three months before a second N64 remake—Star Fox 64 3D—hit, and it too proved to be more than a mere port. The first-party floodgates really began to open in October, though, when Tetris Axis hit, followed by at least one major Nintendo title each month through the holidays.

The N3DS is now home to both new Super Mario and Mario Kart games, along with entries in some other major franchises, including Pokémon. It's a far cry from where things stood a year ago, and the uptick looks to be continuing apace with major releases lined up for 2012, including Kid Icarus: Uprising (see the review on page 78), Luigi's Mansion 2, and Mario Tennis Open (see the feature on page 58).

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE: **Super Mario 3D Land, Mario Kart 7, The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D, Star Fox 64 3D, nintendogs + cats, Pilotwings Resort**

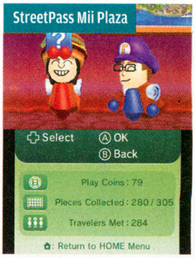
RATING: **EXCELLENT**

Star Fox 64 3D
LANDMASTER

Pilotwings Resort
0:35
99
48 MPH
SPEED
158
ALTITUDE

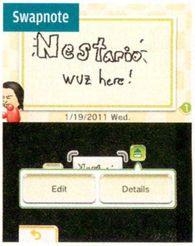
[Below] Mario's latest kart-racing title is one of the best reasons to own a Nintendo 3DS.

Mario Kart 7


StreetPass Mii Plaza

Select
Ⓐ OK
Ⓑ Back
Play Coins : 79
Pieces Collected : 280 / 305
Travelers Met : 284
: Return to HOME Menu

[Above] Trading puzzle pieces with other players is both rewarding and addictive.


Swapnote

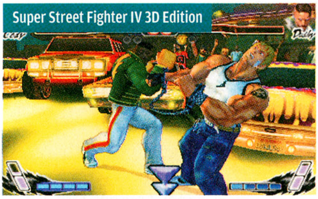
Nestario
wuz here!
1/19/2011 Wed.

Community

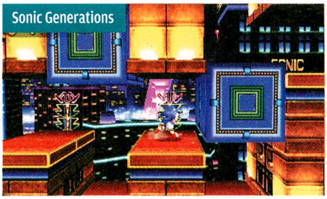
Never before has a Nintendo system encouraged so many players to get together. From gaining extra power-ups in Super Mario Land 3D via StreetPass to exchanging messages over Swapnote, the system offers numerous reasons to engage with fellow users. Even the act of sharing Mii characters has been turned into a game with the built-in StreetPass Mii Plaza (which contains the incredibly addictive Find Mii and Puzzle Swap activities). In addition, Nintendo has made great strides with online community features by tying friend codes to the system (rather than requiring a different code for each game) and allowing you to see what your friends are up to at any given time. We'd still love to see StreetPass used in more games, however.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE: **Swapnote, StreetPass Mii Plaza**

RATING: **VERY GOOD**



At the system's launch, Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition was the best third-party game available.



Sonic Generations was one of several great third-party games released in the last few months.

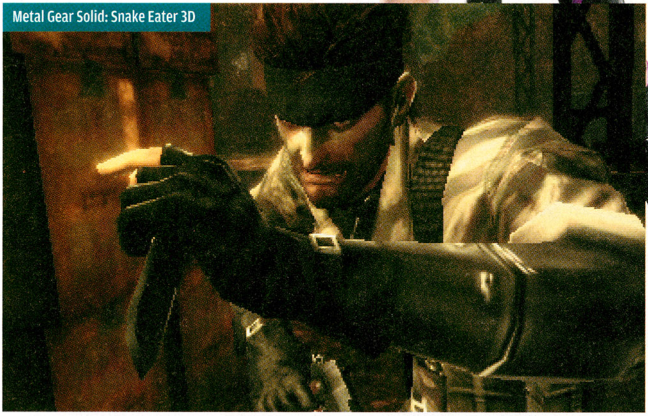
Third-Party Support

The N3DS has had fairly strong third-party support from the outset in terms of sheer quantity of games—although early on, not all titles on offer were top-tier. A trio of strong showings at launch—Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition from Capcom, Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars from Ubisoft, and Ridge Racer 3D from Namco Bandai—significantly outshone most other titles. In the following months, however, very few third-party games were released and others got delayed. Fortunately, highlights such as Tecmo Koei's Dead or Alive Dimensions and Capcom's Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D provided some much-needed oomph before other quality products (including Sega's Sonic Generations, Namco Bandai's Ace Combat: Assault Horizon Legacy, and NIS America's Cave Story 3D) arrived in time for the holidays.

Things have gotten even more promising in 2012. We've already seen two major third-party releases—Resident Evil: Revelations from Capcom and Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D from Konami—hit stores, bringing console-quality experiences to the handheld.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE: Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition, Resident Evil: Revelations, Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D, Sonic Generations, Dead or Alive Dimensions

RATING: VERY GOOD



The M-rated Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D is another example of a top-tier third party release.

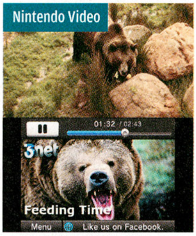
Applications

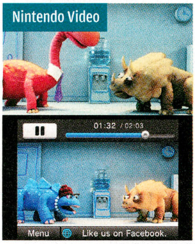
The Swapnote message-sharing program is fun, but overall the nongame applications on N3DS in the past year haven't especially wowed us. The Netflix software was the biggest addition to this category, and while it's a nice extra, the application is plagued by long startup times for movies and shows. Nintendo Video is cool in concept, but the offerings are limited and often not very compelling; it has a way to go before it's really a key part of the N3DS experience. And where are the full-length 3D movies? They have yet to materialize beyond *Tekken: Blood Vengeance*—and that's only available as part of the Tekken 3D Prime Edition game. There's a lot of room for creative, enjoyable applications on the system; hopefully we'll see more in the future.

RATING:

NEEDS IMPROVEMENT

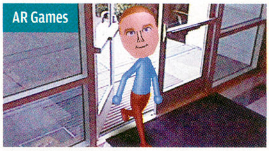
Netflix
NETFLIX





Sure, Nintendo Video is in 3D, but the content is a mixed bag.

Super Mario 3D Land
369



Augmented-reality technology is pretty neat; we just want more games to utilize it.

Use of Hardware Features

Nintendo has done a great job of showing off the key feature of the N3DS: its glasses-free 3D. Easily the best example so far is Super Mario 3D Land, which not only looks amazing but delivers some new types of gameplay and level designs thanks to the effect. Even when it's been incorporated into existing titles and hasn't changed the gameplay (such as in The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D and Star Fox 64 3D), the effect has looked great.

Third-party publishers have been less driven to fully utilize the 3D aspect (in fact, a few titles—such as Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked—almost fully eschew 3D visuals), but many games that have used it have looked superb. Dead or Alive Dimensions, Resident Evil: Revelations, and Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D are all absolutely eye-popping due to their use of stereoscopic 3D.

The system's other features haven't been implemented as consistently, but in the first year we've seen some solid use of gyro-sensor-based motion controls, augmented reality, and the built-in cameras. One example of excellent gyroscopic controls is in The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D, in which you can greatly improve your first-person aim via motion controls. The photo-based camo in Snake Eater 3D is a lot of fun, as well. Augmented reality has the most room for improvement; though the system's built-in AR Games collection is a showcase, we're waiting for more major releases that take advantage of this promising capability.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE: Super Mario 3D Land, The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D, AR Games, Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D

RATING: **VERY GOOD**

Online Gameplay

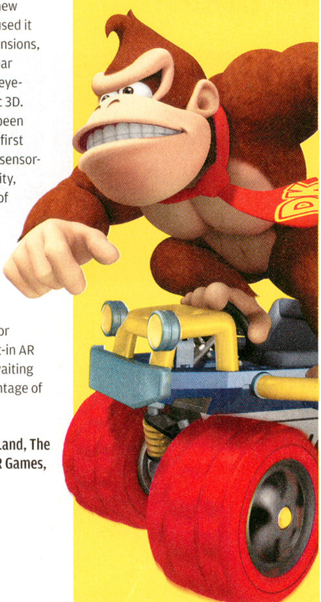
Only one game has fulfilled the promise of the N3DS as an online-gaming machine in its first year: Mario Kart 7. From its solid racing experience over large distances to its clever communities and ghost-sharing, Mario Kart 7 has given us hope for the system's online-multiplayer capabilities.

Unfortunately, some of the biggest multiplayer titles released in the past year—such as Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition, Dead or Alive Dimensions, and Tekken 3D Prime Edition—had highly touted online components but underwhelmed in that regard, suffering from severe lag and just not making the most of the system's potential. We'd like to see more publishers use Mario Kart 7 as an example of quality online gaming moving forward.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:
Mario Kart 7

RATING:

NEEDS IMPROVEMENT



Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars
戻る
選択

[Above] Strategy games on N3DS are few and far between, but at least Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars is a quality effort.

Ridge Racer 3D
POS.
4th
NYA
MAPPY
SLIPSTREAM
NITRO
6
240
km/h

[Below] For a palm-sweat-inducing example of the action genre, look no further than Sega's Shinobi.

Software Diversity

Since its launch, the N3DS has received plenty of support in the action, adventure, and platforming categories, with games such as Super Mario 3D Land, Shinobi, Cave Story 3D, Sonic Generations, and Star Fox 64 3D. There have been a handful of racing games as well (most notably Mario Kart 7 and Ridge Racer 3D), and the system has become an embarrassment of riches where fighting games are concerned, playing host to top-notch titles such as Tekken 3D Prime Edition, BlazBlue: Continuum Shift II, WWE All Stars, Dead or Alive Dimensions, and Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition. Unfortunately, a few categories remain tragically under-represented. For instance, in the RPG genre, only Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked, Tales of the Abyss, and Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns have been released so far, and all three of them are ports. In addition, strategy games and first-person shooters have yet to make a splash on N3DS—there has been only one of the former (Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars) and none of the latter. The system could use a few more quality sports titles, too; we expect Mario Tennis Open to begin leading that charge.

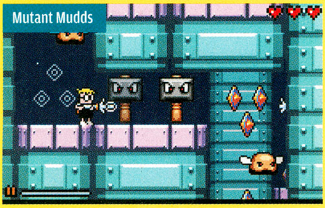
RATING: **SATISFACTORY**

The Nintendo 3DS eShop

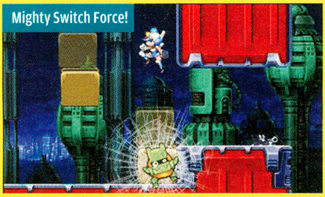
The good news is that the Nintendo eShop is packed with loads of great games. In fact, some of the best titles available on the system hail from the eShop, including Pushmo, Mighty Switch Force!, VVVVVV, and Mutant Mudds. The selection of Virtual Console games has also been strong, providing hits such as The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening DX, Super Mario Land 2: 6 Golden Coins, Metroid II: Return of Samus, Donkey Kong, and Mario's Picross. The recent launch of demos for retail games has made this part of the N3DS even more indispensable. The bad news? The eShop remains fairly difficult to navigate. The ability to simply browse an alphabetized list of titles would be nice.

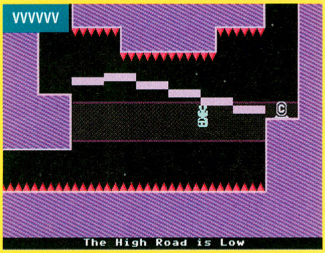
HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE: **Mighty Switch Force!, VVVVVV, Mutant Mudds, The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening DX, Super Mario Land 2: 6 Golden Coins, Mario's Picross**

RATING: **VERY GOOD**

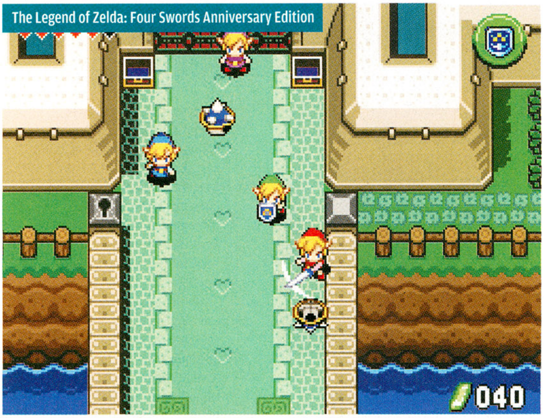

Mutant Mudds

[Above] Mutant Mudds is an excellent downloadable game that makes great use of stereoscopic 3D.


Mighty Switch Force!


VVVVVV

Don't be fooled by the simple graphics. VVVVVV is arguably the finest Nintendo eShop offering.

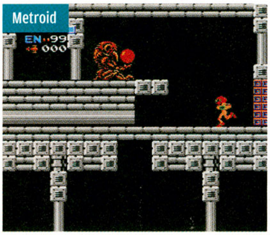

The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Anniversary Edition

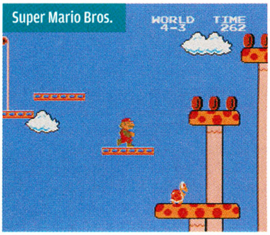
The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Anniversary Edition was a fantastic game that, until February 20, was available for free for all Nintendo 3DS and Nintendo DSi owners.

Value

It seems like Nintendo is constantly giving N3DS owners more bang for their buck. Sometimes it's new Puzzle Swap puzzles, and sometimes it's entire free games such as 3D Classics Excitebike and The Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Anniversary Edition. And there's also all the software that's built into the system, such as Face Raiders and AR Games. Not bad for $169.99—and the upcoming lineup of games only helps makes the handheld even more enticing. Even if you bought an N3DS back when it was $249.99, Nintendo has made that early adoption worthwhile by offering 20 free Virtual Console titles (via the Ambassador Program), many of which aren't available for purchase by general audiences.

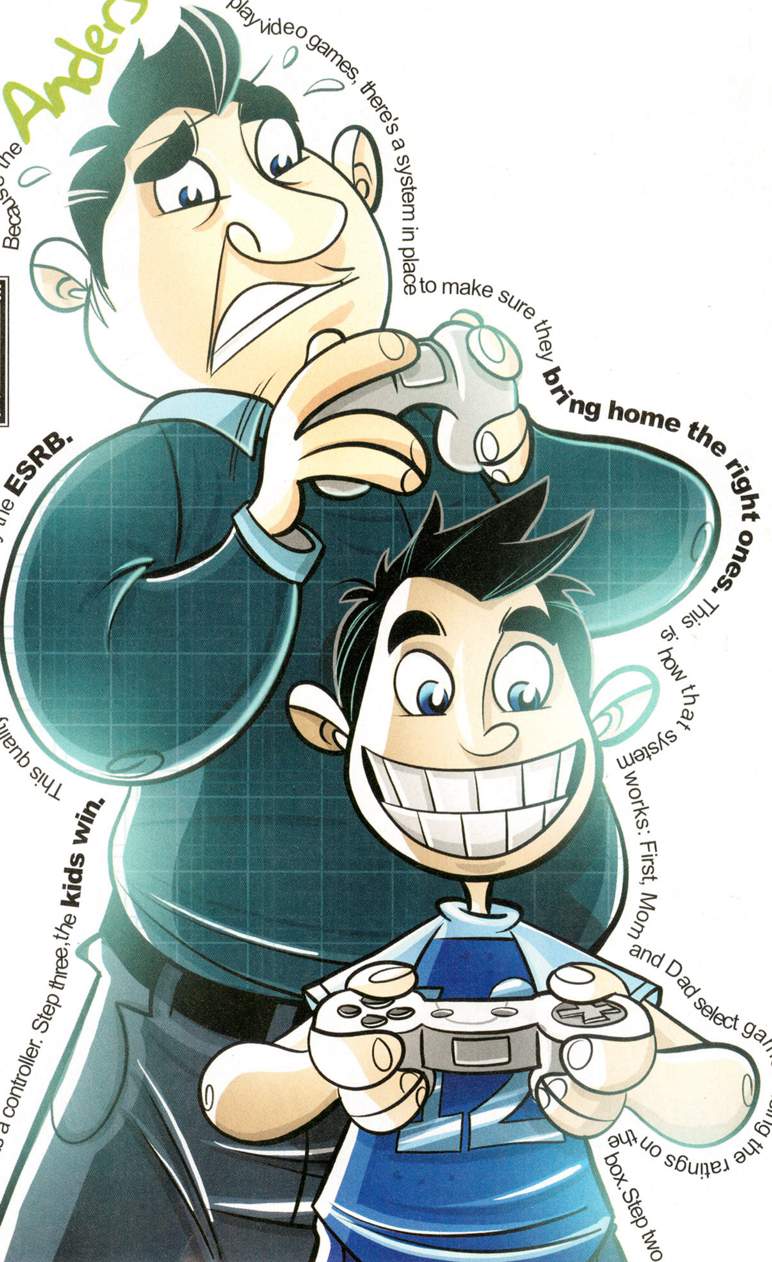
RATING: **EXCELLENT**


Metroid


Super Mario Bros.

Overall

In the last 12 months, the Nintendo 3DS system has certainly proven its worth; not everything is perfect, but the system has gone from what some might call a questionable proposition to a handheld that no Nintendo gamer should be caught without. And from what we've seen so far, the future looks even brighter.



Because the **Andersons** play video games, there's a system in place to make sure they **bring home the right ones.** This is how that system works: First, Mom and Dad select games using the ratings on the box. Step two everyone gets a controller. Step three, the **kids win.** This quality time is presented by the **ESRB.**

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

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59

Power Profiles

DATE OF BIRTH
November 10, 1968

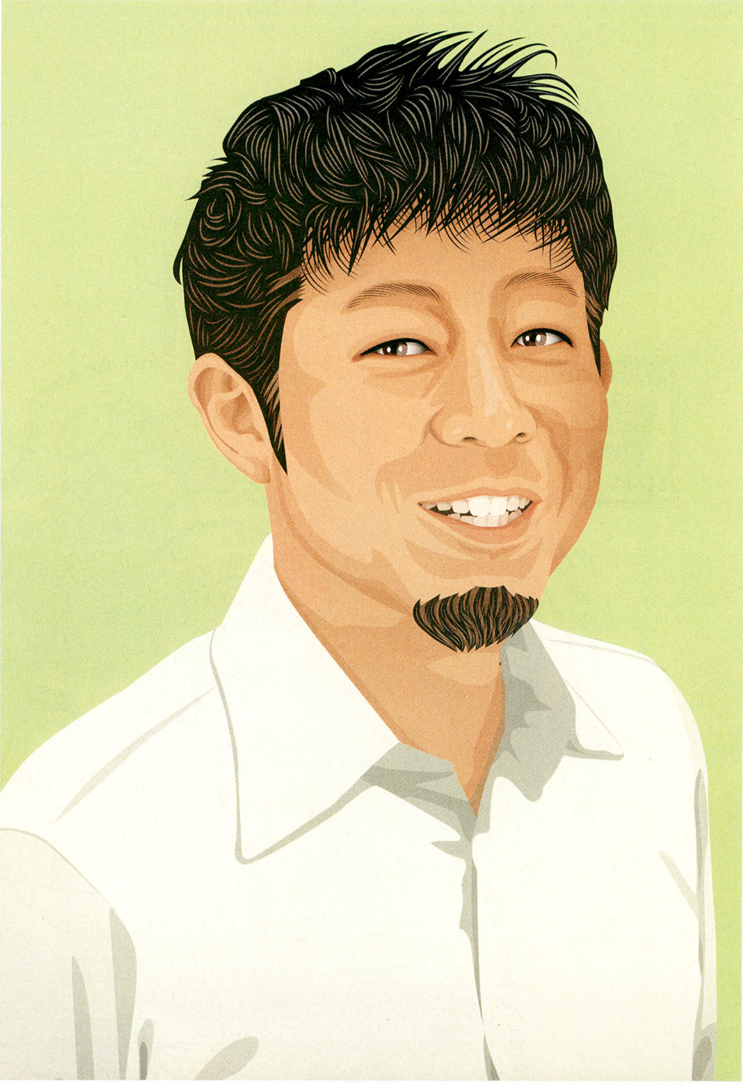
BIRTHPLACE
Hyogo Prefecture, Kobe City, Japan

POSITION
Producer, Capcom

BEST KNOWN FOR
Creating Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure; producing numerous other Capcom projects

FAVORITE FOOD
Sushi

CURRENT PROJECTS
Monster Hunter 3 (Tri) G, Professor Layton vs. Ace Attorney



Hironobu Takeshita

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

Do you like Capcom games? If so, you've surely played the work of Hironobu Takeshita, a Capcom veteran of nearly 20 years. Originally part of the sales and promotion group, Takeshita took on the mantle of producer in the late 1990s and hasn't looked back. In one way or another, he's been involved with nearly every popular series in the company's portfolio—from Breath of Fire to Mega Man to Street Fighter to Resident Evil—and he's introduced the world to original properties such as the award-winning Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective and the criminally underappreciated Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure. Though the types of games are often diverse, the result is usually the same: fun and excitement for players all over the world.

NINTENDO POWER
How did you originally get into the video game business?

HIRONOBU TAKESHITA
A friend invited me to several video game companies' explanatory events for job-seeking graduates like myself. I joined Capcom after taking and passing their entrance examination.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I was into historical relics such as Moai statues and Egyptian pyramids, so I thought it would be cool to be an archaeologist.

Were you a big gamer and Capcom fan prior to starting with the company?

Yes. I was a big fan of arcade games such as Vulgus, 1942, Commando, 1943, and Final Fight.

What kind of things did you do when you first started with Capcom?

I started out working in sales promotion—visiting retailers, introducing them to our products, and researching their selling situations. I experienced firsthand how much anticipation users had for our products when I saw the preorder numbers for the Super NES version of Street Fighter II and the lines of people waiting to buy the game. I also remember being at a game store on the day Mickey's Magical Quest was released on the SNES. This little elementary-school kid walked in and said, "I want Mickey!" That made me very happy! The thinking at the time was that Disney games were a hard sell. Mickey's Magical Quest was well-reviewed, so I just wanted to get it into the hands of our customers, and seeing that kid made me feel like we'd succeeded. After that, I was so grateful to everyone that bought a Capcom game, and every time I remembered that kid's face it made me want to keep doing my best at my job.

How did you make the move from sales to a producer role?

When Capcom first introduced the producer role, people were being considered from both the development and business sides of the company. At the recommendation of my superiors, I was among the candidates for promotion, and as I was interested in the role, I made the move.

Breath of Fire III was your first game as a producer, but we haven't seen much of the series lately. Have you given any thought to bringing that franchise back?

That title means a lot to me, as it was the first game I worked on as producer, and the first time Capcom challenged the RPG genre. If I had the chance, I'd love to revisit the franchise.

Speaking of classic Capcom properties, we were big fans of Mega Man 9 and 10. Are there any other series that you'd like to see get a similar old-school treatment?

First of all, I really appreciate hearing you were fans of those games. I'm also a big fan of them! Personally, I'd like to see Commando return in a really old-school style, with multiplayer.

Come to think of it, you've been involved with a number of compilation and old-school projects; is this something you have a particular passion for? Do you prefer the old style of games to big-budget modern games?

I think I may have a preference for old-school games. It might be because of my experience. There is a scale and volume that can only be realized in a big-budget game, and I think that's one of their main appeals, but I would have to say that I like more-personal, experimental games made by smaller teams. Such games have a degree of freedom and silliness—in the best possible sense of the word—and that's what I love about them.

Do you think it's important for classic games to be preserved and kept available for future generations?

Yes, I think it's very important. Classic games have simple rules, but are also very strategic. They take patience to complete, but the sense of satisfaction one gets from doing so is unparalleled. I believe that experiencing the joys of the classics allows us to deepen our love for video games.

Are you still interested in making a Zack & Wiki sequel? If so, what would it be like? Have you given any consideration to what a sequel could be like on Nintendo 3DS?

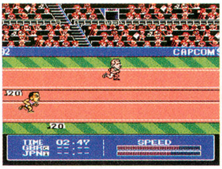
I have a great deal of interest in doing a sequel. It's one of several IPs that I want to return to. As for Nintendo 3DS...it would be fun if people could play and solve puzzles together.

What lessons did you take away from your experience on Zack & Wiki?

The importance of cooperation and coordination with staff outside Japan. We cooperated very closely right from the beginning of development, from discussion of concepts to research during development, sales meetings, and so on. They really helped us out when we were stuck or had concerns, and it was because

GAMEOGRAPHY

Though not shown here, the first game in which Takeshita was listed in the credits was Street Fighter II: Special Champion Edition for Sega Genesis. He received a special thanks for suggesting the product's Japanese name: Street Fighter II' Plus.



CAPCOM'S GOLD MEDAL CHALLENGE '92
1992, NES
SALES & PROMOTION

BREATH OF FIRE III
1998, PLAYSTATION
PRODUCER

BREATH OF FIRE IV
2000, PLAYSTATION
PRODUCER

ZACK & WIKI: QUEST FOR BARBAROS' TREASURE
2007, Wii
PRODUCER

Power Profiles

of this close cooperation that we could announce the game with confidence. Overall, I realized how important it was to have allies like this, and not just in development.

We thought Ghost Trick was quite extraordinary. But from your point of view, is there anything you would have done differently if you'd had more time?
Director Shu Takumi's script was so fun that if I'd had more time, I would have liked to make the game longer and to include more of his story ideas.

How would you compare Sissel to other characters you've worked with? Do you think we'll be seeing any more of him?
I like that his charm comes from his dialogue, which is very different from the kind of cool characters in action games I've worked on. One of director Shu's greatest talents is in creating characters like Sissel, who have such individuality and humor. If the fans show a lot of strong support, they may have a chance to meet a new Sissel sometime....

What are the differences between working on existing series and working on original titles? Do you prefer one over the other?
Working on new titles really enthuses me, and I want to work with my staff to continue to release innovative new IPs, and to see those titles loved by many users over a long period of time.

You've been involved in a lot of different franchises and genres. Is that something you actively seek out or is that more of a coincidence?
It's mostly coincidence, but I'm glad I had the chance to work on so many different things. Working on something new means there are lots of things I don't understand at first, and it's a lot of hard work, but it's so challenging and there are so many new discoveries that I can learn a lot, which makes me happy.

Capcom has some big anniversaries coming up for Street Fighter and Mega Man. Would you want to be involved in celebrating those anniversaries?
I would like to be involved in the celebrations if I get a chance. We had a Web show to celebrate Mega Man's birthday when we announced Mega Man 10, so it would be nice to celebrate with the fans like that again.

How have things changed in the gaming industry since you started?
This industry constantly changes with the advance of technological innovation. Development keeps getting bigger and bigger in scale, and home and portable consoles are getting close to being able to visually reproduce anything we can imagine. I think that beyond improved visuals and network features, there will be changes that we haven't even been able to imagine yet.

> *"I always wanted to have a job related to fun, play, and making people happy..."*

What aspect of creating a video game do you enjoy the most?
For me, there's simply nothing like the feeling of happiness that I get when someone who has bought and played one of my games tells me that they enjoyed it. That's when I feel glad to be a game developer. For instance, I was recently in France, where many people told me they were big Breath of Fire fans. They have not only made me happy and encouraged me to continue in my work, but given me a memory that I'll cherish forever.

If you weren't making games, what do you think you'd be doing?
Hmm...I always wanted to have a job related to fun, play, and making people happy, so I think I'd be doing something like working for a theme park or making toys.

When you're stumped by a particularly difficult problem while creating a game, what's your process for working through it?
Teamwork is very important in game development. When I come up against a problem, the first thing I do is consult the team. We may not always succeed, but by working together we can bring our experience to bear on the next challenge.

What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect, and why?
Noritaka Funamizu, who used to be my boss. I have a lot of respect for him, as he was one of the most important people at Capcom in the early days of the company. I learned a great many things from working with him.

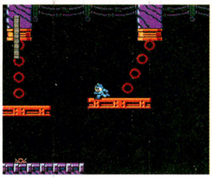
Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you most admire or enjoy?
I adore the Japanese animated series *Space Battleship Yamato*. I can't wait to see the remake that's coming out this year and see what they've done to update it!

What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
I like going for drives, watching movies, and eating good food, among other things. Last week, I went to see the Ace Attorney movie with my wife. It was a lot of fun to see Phoenix Wright doing his thing up there on the big screen! Next week I'm going to a favorite Italian restaurant in my neighborhood. And soon I'm going to see sumo!

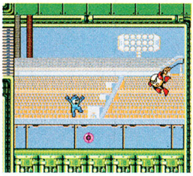
If you could have one superpower, what would it be?
I would like the ability to travel through time. I loved H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* as a kid. It would be great to travel to the distant past and visit the far future!

GAMEOGRAPHY

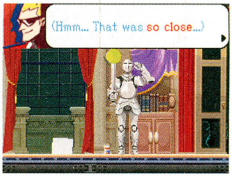
WE LOVE GOLF!
2008, Wii
PRODUCER



MEGA MAN 9
2008, Wii
PRODUCER



MEGA MAN 10
2010, Wii
PRODUCER



GHOST TRICK: PHANTOM DETECTIVE
2011, NINTENDO DS
PRODUCER

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Because Jess plays video games the ESRB (that's the Entertainment Software Rating Board) understands that some games aren't right for everyone.
Just like movies, every game has a rating. And those ratings come from the ESRB.

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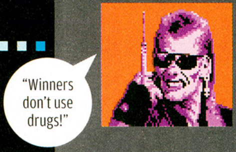
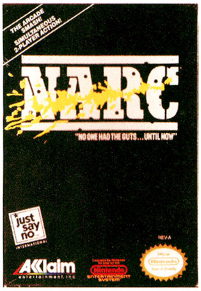
www.ESRB.org

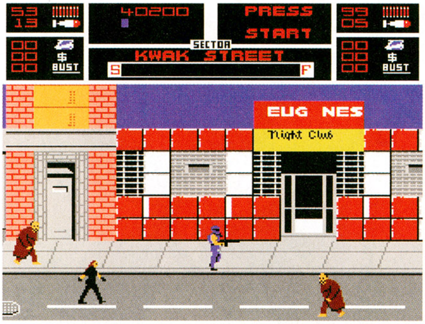

"Winners don't use drugs!"


THE ARCADE SMASH! SIMULTANEOUS 2-PLAYER ACTION!
NARC
"NO ONE HAD THE GUTS...UNTIL NOW"
just say no
REV-A
Acclaim

Narc

Just say yes to turning drug-pushing slimeballs into Swiss cheese.

PLATFORM: **NES**
PUBLISHER: **ACCLAIM**
DEVELOPER: **RARE/WILLIAMS**
RELEASE DATE: **AUGUST 1990**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **16, 22**
POINT VALUE FOR A BAG OF "STUFF": **2,000**



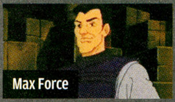
Everyone on Kwak Street is a criminal of some sort, and every one of them is gunning for Max Force. Get the missile launcher ready!

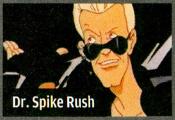
Everybody knows that drugs are bad. But back in the '80s and early '90s, it wasn't enough for parents and ad campaigns to tell you to stay away from drugs. Nope; back then, there was a *war* on drugs, and that war came to the forefront of the video game known as Narc.

Originally a side-scrolling arcade title from Williams/Midway, Narc taught players to "Just say no!" in the most visceral way possible: by having them visit the seedy side of town to eliminate the dealers and other villains by any means necessary. Controlling Max Force (we don't know if that's a code name or if the dude's first name is Max) and, in a two-player game, Hit Man, it was up to gamers to battle through crime-infested streets, slums, and hideouts, blasting enemies with machine guns and turning them into chunks with rocket launchers. On occasion you'd hop into your specially enhanced, fully armed Porsche convertible and teach the bad guys a lesson in reckless driving, and all the while you'd need to be on the lookout for extra ammo and discarded contraband. To call the action over-the-top is an understatement, but you could implement nonviolent tactics, as well: by walking right up to the most common foes you could arrest them, thus earning more points than if you'd simply defeated them.

Though the NES version of Narc retained all the levels and co-op action of its coin-operated counterpart, a few concessions were required. The realistic, high-resolution, digitized graphics of the arcade game had to be substantially simplified (which cut down the brutality as a result), and the number of onscreen enemies was reduced. In addition, the arcade version's four-button interface had to be reconfigured for the two face buttons of the NES controller. On the other hand, the quarter-munching difficulty level remained; you couldn't even continue without entering a secret code.

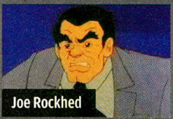
Narc on the NES wasn't what you'd call great, but it nonetheless did a decent job of delivering the arcade experience at home. Perhaps more important than the gameplay, however, was Narc's powerful socially conscious message: don't do drugs, or some dude will probably blow you up with a missile. —**CHRIS H.**

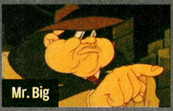

Max Force


Dr. Spike Rush

JOIN THE TEAM

Not content to stay confined to a video game, Narc protagonist Max Force made the leap to animated entertainment on the "Power Team" segments of the early-'90s television program *Video Power*. Alongside heroes from other Acclaim-published titles—including knight Kuros from Wizards & Warriors, basketball player Tyrone from Arch Rivals, Kwirk the chilled tomato from his self-titled Game Boy adventure, and famous monster truck Bigfoot from the game of the same name—Max Force fought evil with the aid of the "totally hip" gamer Johnny Arcade. A few Narc enemies also appeared on the program; the game's evil crime kingpin, Mr. Big, was the show's main villain, and he was aided by his two flunkies, "Hypoman" Dr. Spike Rush and "Dumpster Man" Joe Rockhed.


Joe Rockhed


Mr. Big

HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
Send us your requests—we'll consider them for a future installment of Playback. nintendopower@futureus.com

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

HELLO
my name is
Chris

This is **Chris**, hardcore gamer. He's been playing games ever since he could grip a controller. When he was growing up, **his parents used the ESRB ratings** to choose the games that were right for him. One day he'll use the ratings to **decide what games his kids play** – he just doesn't know it yet.

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COMIC HEROES

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"I'M RI
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ALAN
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REVIEWS

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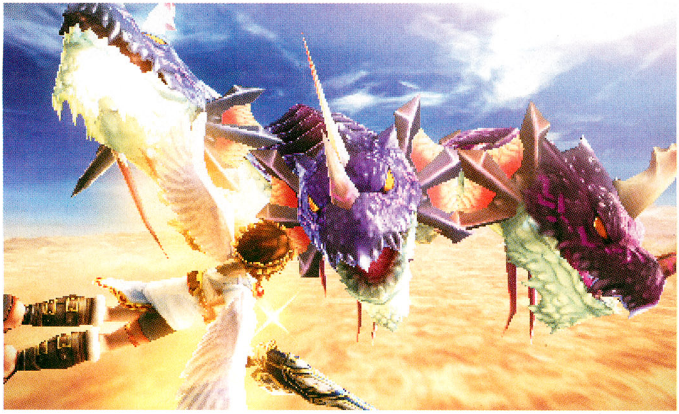
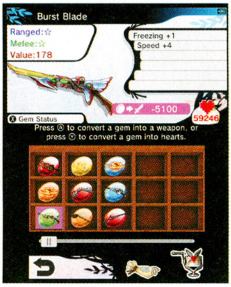
Pit's back, and he's better than ever! Turn the page to find out why we think Kid Icarus: Uprising may be the best Nintendo 3DS title yet.





Press Ⓐ to convert a gem into a weapon, or press Ⓨ to convert a gem into hearts.

Here's Looking at You, Kid

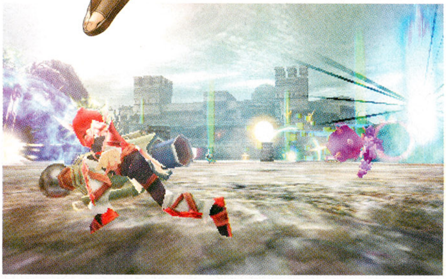
KID ICARUS: UPRISING

9.5

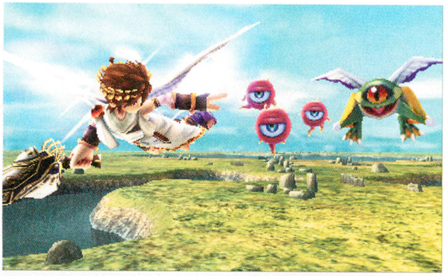
"Sorry to keep you waiting!" Pit says when he dives into the fray as Kid Icarus: Uprising begins. And although it has been four years since we last saw the angelic hero (in Super Smash Bros. Brawl), this statement is more likely an acknowledgement of the more than two decades since Pit's last solo adventure (1991's Kid Icarus: Of Myths and Monsters for Game Boy). I'm very happy to say that Pit's latest exploit is more than worth the wait.

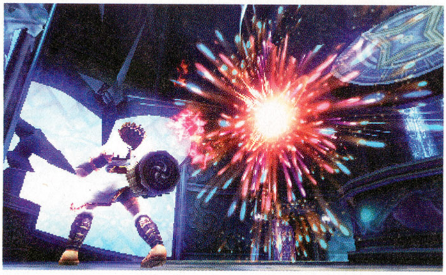
Uprising is a direct sequel to the original Kid Icarus, but set 25 years after the NES classic, reflecting the approximate amount of real-world time since that game's 1987 release. Once again Pit is tasked with facing the armies of the Underworld and taking down Medusa (who has been revived somehow). To help him accomplish this goal, Pit is assisted by the goddess of light, Palutena. Although she mainly serves to provide explanations and exposition, the goddess is never dull—the rapport between her and Pit is fantastic. The optimistic, earnest, sometimes-dorky Pit contrasts well with the nice-yet-slightly-sarcastic Palutena. In fact, Pit's banter with all the speaking characters in the game is great. This is due in part to the solid voice acting, but a lot of credit is owed to the script; it is humorously self-aware, making references to the original Kid Icarus (the main characters note that enemies and items look less pixelated than they did 25 years ago, for example) as well as more-recent Nintendo-published titles. I did feel like I might have missed some of the visual gags, however—such as when Palutena shows you what Medusa looked like in the NES game—because those images appear on the bottom screen, and you'll likely want to focus on the top screen's action. Beyond the genuinely funny bits, the story holds several surprises, but I won't speak of them for fear of spoiling things for you.

The plot isn't the only surprising thing about Uprising; the gameplay



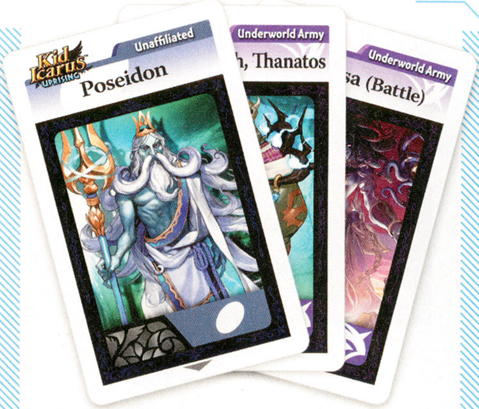
[Above] The multiplayer is even more frantic than the single-player game.





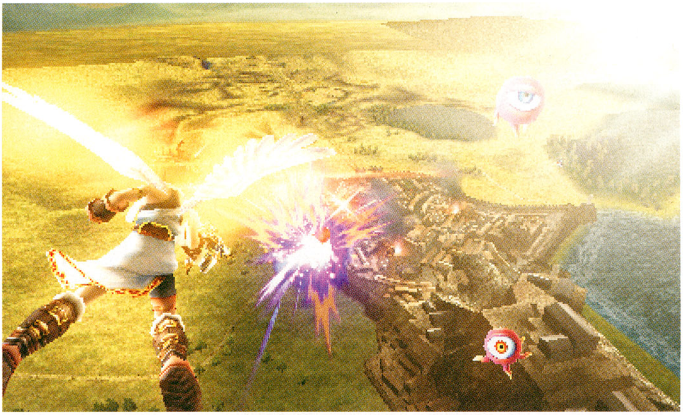
is deeper than it initially seems. The basic controls appear simple: you move about with the Circle Pad, aim with the stylus, and shoot with L. Holding down L gives you machine-gun-like rapid fire, but you can charge up a shot by releasing L and then pressing it again when the reticle changes. The reticle also changes when enemies get close, which tells you that you can employ a melee attack. (Some enemies can be defeated only with melee strikes.)

All of the chapters start off with an on-rails flying sequence reminiscent of Sin and Punishment: Star Successor, so you have to focus on hitting targets and dodging incoming fire. But Pit can fly for just five minutes at a time—after that, his wings burn up like Icarus's wax-and-feather wings from Greek mythology. Before Pit can crash and burn, Palutena places him on the ground. The terrestrial-combat controls are mostly the same as the flight-combat ones (you still primarily use the Circle Pad, touch screen, and L Button), but there are more complexities to them. Because you can move about freely, you use the touch screen to direct not only your reticle, but the camera as well. A small movement

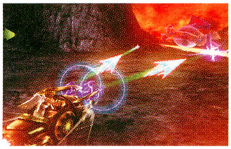


Angel-Land Idol

Acquiring trophies was part of the appeal of Super Smash Bros. Brawl, and a similar feature exists in Kid Icarus: Uprising. Called idols, the collectibles give you polygonal models of characters, baddies, items, and locations to view, as well as some information on the individual subjects. Idols can be obtained in the Idol Toss mode by using eggs; each egg you toss unlocks a random idol. You can earn eggs by playing the game or you can purchase them with Play Coins. However, a cooler way to unlock idols is by using the Nintendo 3DS system's camera in conjunction with the AR Idol Cards. (In addition to the cards bundled with this issue of NP, there are six included with the game. That said, there are supposed to be hundreds of cards in all. For more information on how they'll be distributed, check kidicarus.nintendo.com.) When you view the cards on the top screen of the N3DS, characters will pop up out of them, and if you place these AR idols face to face, an option to make them fight appears on the bottom screen. The battles aren't terribly involved—you don't do anything but watch the combat unfold—but it's a cool idea nonetheless, and it gives you a little more motivation to collect all the AR Idol Cards.



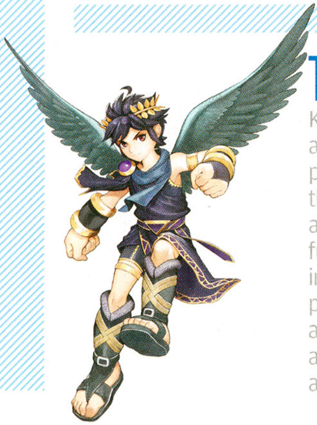
[Below] When he's on the ground, Pit can drive vehicles such as this tank.



on the touch screen allows you to pinpoint targets; a large flick of the stylus moves the camera. Similarly, holding the Circle Pad in a particular direction allows Pit to saunter that way, whereas a quick movement on the pad allows him to dash (hold down the pad after dashing, and he'll run until he's exhausted). This is one of the only parts of the game in which I had an issue—occasionally when I would try to reposition Pit slightly while walking on a narrow platform, I would accidentally make him dash off the side.

I also had to get used to employing the wide array of self-buffing and enemy-harming powers, which are available exclusively when Pit's on the ground. You can use them by tapping icons on the touch screen or by pressing down on the Control Pad (left and right on the Control Pad allows you to select powers). In the heat of battle, it can be easy to forget that you have these abilities at your disposal—although powers can become indispensible when you're playing at higher difficulty levels. Despite having a couple of minor issues with the controls, once I got accustomed to everything I found them to be ideal for a third-person shooter such as this.

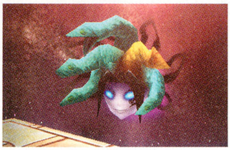
I highly recommend using the stand that comes bundled with the game, as holding the Nintendo 3DS system with one hand can be quite taxing on your arm (more so, I would imagine, if you're a lefty using the Circle Pad Pro accessory)—even if many of the stages aren't particularly lengthy. That said, the relative brevity of the gorgeous levels (seriously, some of these locales look jaw-droppingly spectacular) makes them perfectly paced for a handheld game and provides incentive to play through them again at higher difficulty levels. See, Uprising has a novel difficulty—or, as the game calls it, intensity—system that ranges from 0.0 (easiest) to 9.0 (hardest) and can be modified in increments of 0.1. The standard intensity is 2.0, which gives you a sense of how difficult the game can get if you decide to give yourself a challenge. Why would you do that, you ask? First, meeting or surpassing the required intensity unlocks Intensity Gates in the levels, giving you the opportunity to obtain better weapons. (You also get superior item drops in general at higher intensities.) Second, a higher intensity means you have the potential to earn more hearts, the currency in this game, than you would otherwise. Before you start a stage, you can bet hearts at the Fiend's Cauldron in order to play at a higher intensity. (You bet nothing if you play at 2.0, and you have to spend hearts if you play at anything lower than that.) Successfully beat the level, and you'll be rewarded; fail, and you'll have to pay. On the plus side, you won't

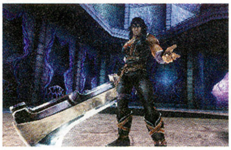


The Dark Side

Kid Icarus: Uprising is chock-full of great characters, but if we had to pick a favorite, it would probably be Pit's doppelganger, Dark Pit. Don't think his penchant for black outfits makes him a two-dimensionally evil version of Pit; he's a fully realized rival who plays an important role in the adventure. Plus, he has the cool bad-boy persona that the plucky Pit could never have, and he can soar through the sky without the assistance of Palutena's Power of Flight (and its accompanying five-minute time limit).

PKFIRE
Toad





lose much progress if you die, as the checkpoints in this title are plentiful.

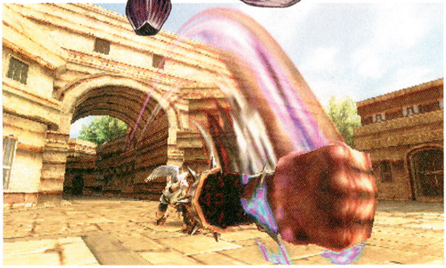
Of course, having powerful tools at your disposal helps even the odds, and you can use hearts to purchase new armaments. Sure, you can find weapons in chests as you progress through the levels, but sometimes the shop has things you haven't found elsewhere. And even if you think you already have a particular weapon, the stats may be completely different in another instance of it. There are nine types of weapons—blade, staff, claws, bow, palm, club, cannon, orbitars, and arm—each with pros and cons. Bows, for example, are great for long range, whereas clubs are better suited to close range. There's enough variety that you should be able to find a type that works well for you.

You can sell weapons to get hearts, but sometimes you'll instead choose to fuse several weapons in an attempt to make a better one. Weapons reach a plateau, though, so it's a good idea to acquire new, stronger ones when the time comes. Fortunately, in addition to spending hearts to buy armaments, you can get new ones via StreetPass. You can take any weapon in your arsenal and create a gem out of it. StreetPassing allows other players to obtain your gem and you to get their gems. You can acquire weapons out of the gems you collect, fuse gems together to make a different arm, or simply convert gems into hearts. This means that regardless of what you choose to do with the gems you receive, you'll always benefit from Uprising's StreetPass functionality.

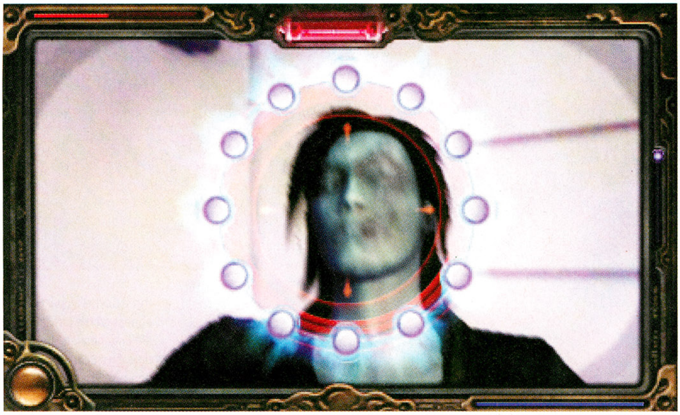
When you do encounter other Kid Icarus: Uprising players, you should definitely try multiplayer. There are two game types for both online and local-wireless play: an up-to-six-player Free-for-All mode or a three-on-three game of Light-vs.-Dark. The former is an every-man-for-himself deathmatch in which you can play against both human- and computer-controlled opponents. Adding a wrinkle are the three Daybreak parts that appear on the battlefield. Finding them all lets you unleash a devastating one-hit-kill weapon. It's similar to the Dragoon from Super Smash Bros. Brawl, another Masahiro Sakurai-directed title.

Free-for-All is fun, but I ended up playing Light-vs.-Dark more often. In this mode, the team members on a particular side—Light or Dark, naturally—share one life gauge. When that gauge is depleted, the next team member that dies assumes the role of Pit (if playing on the Light side) or Dark Pit (if playing on the Dark side). The game is over when either Pit falls, so you end up defending your side's Pit while attempting to dispatch your opponents. Adding another layer of strategy is the fact that you can select any of the weapons from your arsenal to use in the battle. It's a risk-reward proposition: you have a power advantage with a stronger weapon, but the stronger the weapon you equip, the larger the chunk of your team's life bar that will be eaten away if you die.

So not only does Kid Icarus: Uprising have an epic single-player campaign, but it also includes two entertaining multiplayer modes. Furthermore, the game takes advantage of nearly all the features unique to the Nintendo 3DS, from its stunning stereoscopic 3D visuals to the cool AR Card Battles to the ability to trade weapons via StreetPass. This game has everything but the kitchen sink, and in that respect it's a lot like Super Smash Bros. Melee and Brawl. And like those titles, Kid Icarus: Uprising is a masterpiece.
—JUSTIN C.



N3DS
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **PROJECT SORA**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**



Maya

I remember something I heard in the house,
something about the diary of faces...

Caught on Film

SPIRIT CAMERA: THE CURSED MEMOIR

7.0

When you purchased a Nintendo 3DS system, you probably weren't aware that it could allow you to expose the supernatural. With the handheld's camera fashioned as a ghostbusting device, Nintendo's augmented-reality game Spirit Camera: The Cursed Memoir beckons you to reveal and conquer the invisible horrors that haunt our existence.

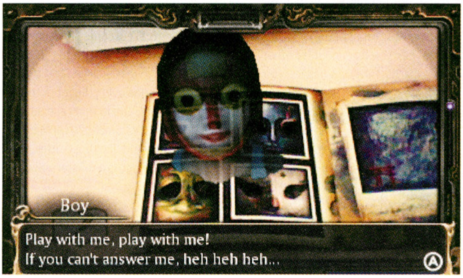
Set within the universe of Tecmo Koei's Fatal Frame series, the story of Spirit Camera begins with the mysterious arrival of a package that contains the Camera Obscura—a special photographic device that allows you to identify and defend against spirits—and a mutilated diary (which is the same as the title's included 16-page AR book). The book is your link between reality and the residence of an entity known as "the Woman in Black," who turns those in possession of the diary into ghastly abominations bent on trapping people within the journal.

Using the handheld's stereoscopic camera as the Camera Obscura, most of the time you'll either be searching for spirits in familiar surroundings or inspecting the spectral diary for clues to end your curse. The setup sounds a little clichéd, but the story's unexpected revelations should hold your attention. More of the plot is revealed as each page comes to life, leading you to clever riddles or exhilarating engagements with vengeful wraiths. Although the battles can be simple, every encounter has you excitedly scouring your environment with the handheld to photograph and defeat the specter.

Unfortunately, Spirit Camera bears more curses than just that of its memoir. Physically interacting with the possessed diary certainly adds realism, but at times the experience can feel gimmicky. Sure, it has its share of creepy content, but for the most part the surprises are pretty tame. It doesn't help that it's impossible to play in the dark—even in a well-lit room I had occasional trouble getting the camera to register the book. It's also a shame that the campaign lasts only about four hours, though the unlockable "Story Mode (Extra)" does provide additional plot details and a higher level of difficulty.

You probably won't be scared out of your seat, but Spirit Camera is a fun AR game. The extra modes are amusing, as well. One lets you fight a ghost that bears a friend's face, and there's an on-rails-shooter-style minigame in which you film spirits within a haunted house. If you enjoyed the system's preinstalled AR Games, consider this a title worth investigating. **—CODY M.**

N3DS
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **TECMO KOEI/NINTENDO**
ESRB: **TEEN**



Boy

Play with me, play with me!
If you can't answer me, heh heh heh...

WRITERS' BLOCK

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE HAPPEN IN THE NINTENDO 3DS SYSTEM'S SECOND YEAR?

JUSTIN CHENG

Just give me more puzzles to complete and more hats to collect, and I'll be a happy N3DS owner.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

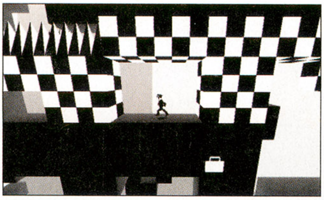
I'd like to be able to stream full-length 3D movies to the Nintendo 3DS. Oh, and I want a new Metroid game. Is that too much to ask?

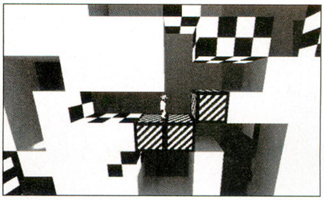
CODY MARTIN

I'd love to see some more 3D Classics added to the eShop. If Super NES titles like Super Metroid and The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past were remastered for N3DS, I think I'd squeal with excitement.

STEVE THOMASON

As great as the system's first year has been, hopefully developers start offering more crazy, experimental titles; stuff like Elite Beat Agents and The World Ends with You that helped define the DS.





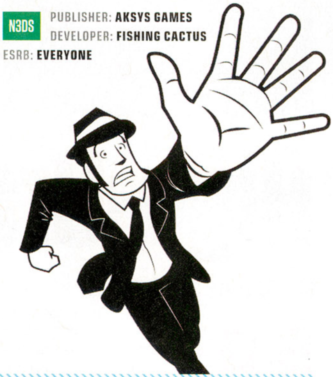
Shift Happens

SHIFTING WORLD

6.5

Sometimes it takes only a few small issues to derail an otherwise-great game. Shifting World is a perfect example. For the most part, it is a lot of fun. The core play mechanic of "shifting" the world—which rotates the environment 180 degrees and turns solid areas into open spaces and vice versa—is very cool and makes for some unique platforming packed with creative level designs and cerebral challenges. There are no weapons to use or enemies to fight—just you, your jumping ability, and your world-altering powers (and instant-death spikes, of course); platforming fans should enjoy the purity of it all. A few wrinkles are added as you proceed through the game—most notably the ability to change the environment from 3D to 2D, thus letting you interact with background elements—but the focus never strays from the title's compelling main hook. Unfortunately, the game does indeed have flaws. The biggest is a jump command that becomes unresponsive if you press it right when you start moving, which proves annoying at best and fatal at worst. Additionally, level navigation is unnecessarily difficult due to a lack of identifying landmarks, and there are areas late in the game that rely on pure trial and error to overcome. (There really should have been a way to scroll the play field so you could look for hazards.) To make matters worse, the stages have no checkpoints, so you're thrust back to the beginning of the level when you die. It's disappointing to see such a promising title held back by problems that could have been easily fixed. **—CHRIS H.**

N3DS PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **FISHING CACTUS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

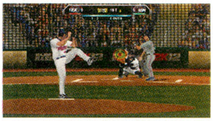


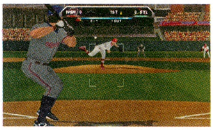
Bush League

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL 2K12

2.5

The exclusive licensing contract that 2K Sports has with Major League Baseball is set to expire at the end of this season, and given the shameful quality of MLB 2K12, that's not a moment too soon. Every facet of this game feels sloppy and half-hearted. When you're at bat, for instance, there are only two camera options. One is set ridiculously far back and the other zooms in when the pitcher starts his windup, then *zooms back out as the ball approaches the plate*. All that movement is incredibly distracting and makes it more difficult to read the pitch. Rosters are horribly outdated, and with the game's complete lack of online functionality, they'll forever stay that way. Commentators frequently misstate the situation on the field, player models regularly clip through each other, and the developers couldn't even bother to re-alphabetize the team menus in response to the newly renamed Miami Marlins; the club formerly known as the Florida Marlins is still listed between Detroit and Houston. I could go on and on, but you get the picture. **—STEVE T.**





Wii PUBLISHER: **2K SPORTS**
DEVELOPER: **2K CHINA**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

High-Grade Blade

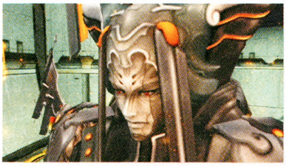
XENOBLADE CHRONICLES

9.0 With its sweeping vistas, engaging premise, and clever battle system, it takes only a few minutes of gameplay to understand why there was so much interest in a North American release of Xenoblade Chronicles. The game may not be perfect, but it's bold, ambitious, and wholly successful at using today's console technology to offer a deep RPG experience—not merely a pretty one.

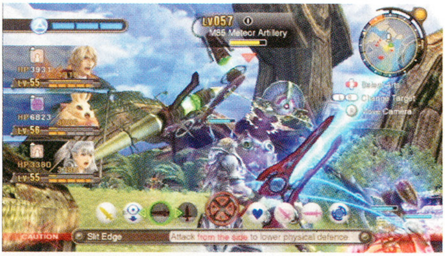
The game's greatest achievement is the scale of its setting. Unlike many modern RPGs that stitch together a series of dioramas and call it a world, Xenoblade Chronicles features a massive, contiguous landmass on a scale rarely seen outside of online games. The story follows a linear progression, but there are always a dozen ways to get from point A to point B, and the world feels like a wild and natural place, not something that was crafted to fit the mechanics of the game or the narrative needs of your adventure.

Xenoblade's areas aren't superficially vast—they're legitimately fun to explore. The extremely talented level designers at Monolith Soft have peppered the maps with intriguing landmarks to lure explorers off the beaten the path, and have designed complicated vertical elements that force players to travel not just around, but over, under, and through the terrain. For example, one area is a sloped, snowy valley laced with natural land bridges that crisscross from cliff face to cliff face, and tunnels that bore through the surrounding mountains to lead to hidden ponds and caverns. The many tiers of traversable surfaces make for a confusing automap, but the valley is full of towers and spires that can be seen from what feels like miles away, allowing players to use the same skills they'd employ to orient themselves in reality. Dungeons are as expertly designed as the field areas, full of alternative routes and satisfying gimmicks.

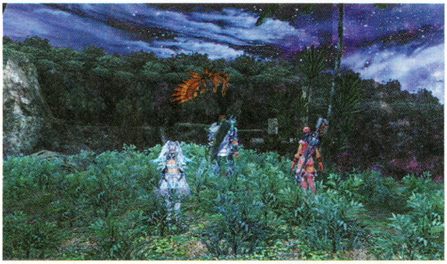
Exploration is rewarding as well as entertaining: the game lavishes experience and ability points on players for discovering far-flung landmarks, and there are plenty of scattered items that can be used to complete the game's simple side quests. The world teems with monsters, but they're rarely aggressive and are easy to avoid when you'd rather wander than fight.



When you do choose to fight, you'll find that just as much of the developer's effort has been lavished on the real-time combat system. Each party member has a unique set of abilities, allowing play-



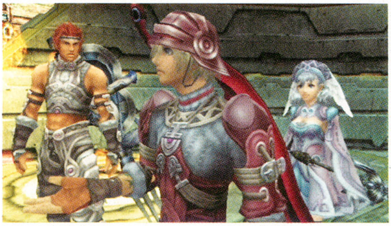
ers to craft different battle plans with each three-character team. For example, you can have your heartiest allies focus on causing distractions while your team leader delivers devastating backstabs, or you can use a trio of characters whose abilities can be combined to hit foes with a chain of progressively debilitating status conditions. The game dispenses with many of the established conventions of RPG combat—you can't guard, and there are no items or magic points—and replaces them with mechanics that are equally intuitive but feel a whole lot fresher. For example, players can run up to their comrades and press a button to revive them from status conditions like sleep and paralysis, and instead of resorting to healing and blocking to stay alive, weaker characters can use abilities to make them seem like less of threat to their opponents, diverting attacks to their comrades instead. Combat is deeply strategic but also viscerally thrilling, with midbattle prophecies that give players a heads-up when a teammate is about to die, but only a few seconds to prevent it. The lone hitch is that bad camera placements often disrupt your cleverly laid plains, and against larger groups of foes, heavy slowdown can mess up your timing.

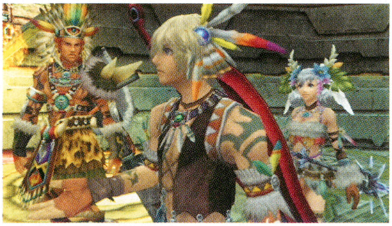


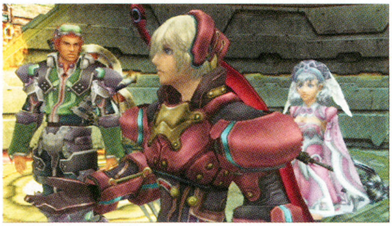
A day-and-night cycle offers both stunning views and needless hassles.

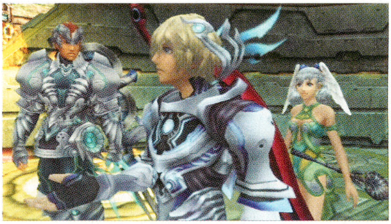
Fashion Show

In Xenoblade Chronicles, every piece of armor has a unique physical appearance that changes completely for every character in your party. Instead of the typical dingy leather, chainmail, and steel plate, the armor designs are extravagant and colorful—and sometimes a tad silly. Playing RPG dress-up has never been more fun!









Music to Our Ears

Strongly believing that music "can make the difference between a good game and a bad one," director Tetsuya Takahashi hired six composers (including longtime collaborator Yasunori Mitsuda and Yoko Shimomura of Kingdom Hearts fame) to get the exact right artist for each of the game's 90 pieces of music. This unusual hands-on approach paid off beautifully: when the 2012 Nintendo Power Awards roll around, Xenoblade Chronicles will be the game to beat in the Best Soundtrack category.

If the three pillars of a good RPG are exploration, combat, and story, Xenoblade Chronicles scores big wins in two out of three but can't quite pull off the trifecta. The story is strong in a lot of ways: it grabs you right off the bat with a powerful, emotionally engaging opening. The setting—it takes place on the bodies of two fallen gods— is unique and fascinating. The first half of the game feels like a classic fantasy epic, charting a hero's journey up the body of a god, whereas the second half focuses on the world's complicated mythology, including a series of twists reminiscent of director Tetsuya Takahashi's past works, Xenogears and Xenosaga. That's all well and good, but the writing team apparently decided the game would need a lot more story than that, so they cracked open their Encyclopedia of Anime Clichés to pad the narrative with a bunch of silly subplots and trite complications. A so-so localization doesn't help matters; the voice cast does a great job, but the overly literal script translation leads to lots of awkward dialogue, and the lip movements don't always sync up to the English voices. (Players do have the option of playing with subtitles and the original Japanese voices.) The subplots and dialogue never get so bad that you stop caring about the game's central story, but each new event scene is as likely to induce a cringe as it is to elicit excitement or intrigue.

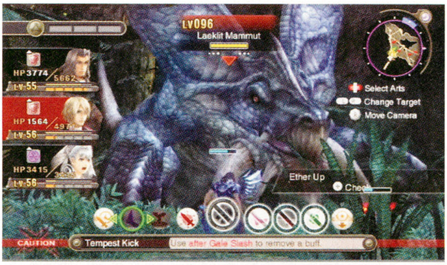
The problem of burying good ideas under layers of needless content is an oddly prevalent one in Xenoblade Chronicles. For example, the game has a number of strong

character-customization systems: you can upgrade arts as you see fit, learn skills from skill trees and other characters, equip a wide variety of arms and armaments, and slot gems into your gear to add additional abilities. The system would have been perfect if the developers had stopped there, but they decided that instead of just finding the gems, players would collect ingredients from mining spots and defeated enemies, and forge those components into gems in an unnecessarily complicated and time-consuming minigame that adds nothing but tedium to the experience. The game's cities are another example: I love their massive scale, and I don't mind spending 30 or 40 minutes in each city talking to everyone to add their names to the game's affinity chart, see what goods they're willing to trade, and fill my quest log with their side quests. But the game goes a step too far by adding a day-and-night cycle and having different people appear at different times of day. So every time you want to make a pass through the city to find new quests and trade items, you have to do so twice. It gets old fast.

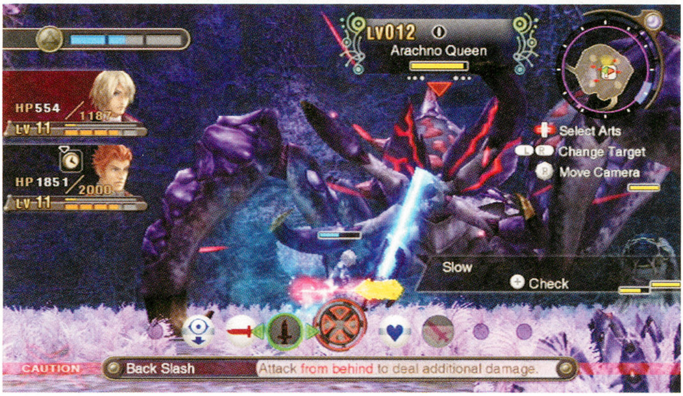
The side-quest system is another area in which the developers opted for quantity over quality, although in that case they didn't ruin a good thing by going too far, since there's barely anything good about it at all. The game has nearly 500 side quests, but the vast majority of them boil down to "kill three of this monster" or "collect three of this item." The quests are sent into an in-game quest log that quickly grows to an unmanageable size, and even if you were determined to complete all the quests, the descriptions wouldn't tell you where to find the enemies or items you need. If you explore widely and aren't afraid to pick a fight now and then, you'll complete most of the quests without even realizing that you're pursuing them—not exactly a satisfying experience. Buried amidst the hundreds of fetch quests is a handful that are actually kind of interesting, but even those tend to hit a wall when you need to find an obscure item that's randomly dropped by an obscure enemy that the quest description won't tell you how to find.

Fortunately, Xenoblade Chronicles has so much going on that it's easy enough to ignore the things you don't like. If you're not interested in pursuing side quests and talking to city dwellers, there are still plenty of items to collect, achievements to earn, and optional high-level monsters to fight, all of which offer rewards of their own. Xenoblade Chronicles has a ton of content, and you can easily spend 80-100 hours in its world, even if you're picking and choosing what you want to do.

While most other Japanese RPGs are still slavishly adhering to a 20-year-old gameplay template, it's thrilling to see a game attempt so many unconventional things and get so many of them right. Xenoblade Chronicles isn't just a breath of fresh air in a genre that has grown stagnant—it's a high-capacity oxygen tank packed with enough fresh air to keep RPG fans breathing for months. **—CASEY L.**


LV096
Laeklit Mammut
HP 3774 / 5662
LV 55
HP 1564 / 497
LV 56
HP 3415
LV 58
Select Arts
Change Target
Move Camera
Ether Up
Check
CAUTION
Tempest Kick
Use after Gale Slash to remove a buff.

Screen-filling monsters are a Xenoblade specialty.


LV012
Arachno Queen
HP554 / 1187
LV 11
HP 1851 / 2000
LV 11
Select Arts
Change Target
Move Camera
Slow
Check
CAUTION
Back Slash
Attack from behind to deal additional damage.

Wii
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **MONOLITH SOFT**
ESRB: **TEEN**

REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

Nintendo 3DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon Legacy	7.5	Namco Bandai	273	T
Asphalt 3D	6.0	Ubisoft	266	E10+
Bit.Trip Saga	8.0	Aksys	271	E
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift II	8.5	Aksys	268	T
Captain America: Super Soldier	5.0	Sega	273	T
Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion	7.0	Crave	267	E10+
Cave Story 3D	8.0	NIS America	273	E10+
Centipede: Infestation	6.5	Atari	273	E10+
Cooking Mama 4: Kitchen Magic	5.0	Majesco	273	E
Crush 3D	7.0	Sega	275	E10+
Cubic Ninja	4.0	Ubisoft	268	E
Dead or Alive Dimensions	9.0	Tecmo Koei	267	T
Deca Sports Extreme	5.0	Konami	271	E
Doctor Lautrec and the Forgotten Knights	6.5	Konami	272	E10+
Driver Renegade	3.0	Ubisoft	271	M
Dual Pen Sports	7.0	Namco Bandai	270	E10+
Face Racers: Photo Finish	4.0	Majesco	271	E
FIFA Soccer 12	7.0	EA Sports	272	E
Frogger 3D	6.5	Konami	271	E
Funky Barn 3D	6.0	Ubisoft	276	E
Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove 3D	5.5	Natsume	271	E
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	4.0	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns 3D	7.5	Natsume	272	E
James Noir's Hollywood Crimes	5.0	Ubisoft	273	T
The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D	9.5	Nintendo	268	E10+
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	7.0	Warner Bros.	274	E10+
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	8.5	LucasArts	266	E10+
Madden NFL Football	6.0	Electronic Arts	266	E
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	7.0	Sega	275	E
Mario Kart 7	9.0	Nintendo	274	E
Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D	9.0	Konami	276	M
Michael Jackson: The Experience	5.0	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Nano Assault	7.0	Majesco	273	E10+
Nikoli's Pencil Puzzle	6.0	Konami	272	E
nintendogs + cats	7.5	Nintendo	266	E
Order Up!!	6.5	UTV Ignition	275	E
Pac-Man & Galaga Dimensions	7.0	Namco Bandai	269	E10+
Pac-Man Party 3D	4.5	Namco Bandai	273	E
Pet Zombies	5.5	Majesco	272	T
Pilotwings Resort	8.0	Nintendo	266	E
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection 3D	7.0	Crave	268	E10+
Pokémon Rumble Blast	7.5	Nintendo	273	E
Rabbids Travel in Time 3D	6.5	Ubisoft	267	E
Rayman 3D	8.0	Ubisoft	266	E
Reel Fishing Paradise 3D	6.0	Natsume	269	E
Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D	7.5	Capcom	269	M
Resident Evil: Revelations	9.0	Capcom	275	M
Ridge Racer 3D	8.0	Namco Bandai	266	E
Samurai Warriors: Chronicles	7.0	Tecmo Koei	266	T
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor Overclocked	9.0	Atlus	271	T
Shinobi	7.5	Sega	273	T
The Sims 3	7.0	Electronic Arts	266	T
The Sims 3 Pets	7.5	Electronic Arts	273	T
Sonic Generations	8.0	Sega	274	E
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	6.0	Activision	273	T
SpongeBob SquigglePants	7.5	THQ	267	E
Star Fox 64 3D	8.0	Nintendo	271	E
Steel Diver	8.0	Nintendo	266	E10+
Super Mario 3D Land	9.0	Nintendo	273	E
Super Monkey Ball 3D	7.5	Sega	266	E
Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition	9.0	Capcom	266	T
Tales of the Abyss	7.0	Namco Bandai	275	T
Tekken 3D Prime Edition	7.5	Namco Bandai	276	T
Tetris Axis	7.5	Nintendo	272	E
Thor: God of Thunder	6.0	Sega	272	T
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars	8.0	Ubisoft	266	T
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell 3D	5.5	Ubisoft	267	T
Transformers: Dark of the Moon—Stealth Force Edition	4.0	Activision	270	E10+
WWE All Stars	7.5	THQ	274	T

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
The Adventures of Tintin: The Game	5.5	Ubisoft	275	E10+
Back to the Future: The Game	6.5	Telltale	273	T

MORE ON:

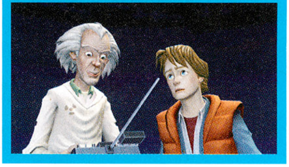
RESIDENT EVIL: REVELATIONS

I've been excited about the Mature-rated Resident Evil: Revelations since its announcement, so my expectations were pretty high. After playing it, I was not disappointed. Not only does this game have impressive visuals, but it also feels like a Resident Evil title should in terms of both atmosphere and controls. (The latter is especially true when you're using the Circle Pad Pro accessory.) —**JUSTIN C.**

MORE ON:

BACK TO THE FUTURE: THE GAME

There's a lot to like about Back to the Future. The story is excellent (although not without a few holes), the puzzles are fun, and the voice acting is some of the best I've heard in ages; getting the original actors for Doc and Jennifer is an especially nice touch. Sadly, the entire game seems like it's going to come crashing down at any moment. It's plagued with frame-rate issues and excessive load times, and there are herky-jerky pauses whenever something eventful occurs. Behind all that is a fine adventure game (especially for fans of the classic films), but you have to look hard to find it. —**CHRIS H.**



MORE ON:

RAYMAN ORIGINS

From vibrantly detailed environments to excellent level design, everything about Rayman Origins is absolutely astounding. And not only is the soundtrack catchy, the entire game seems to keep to its rhythm. Although playing with one friend is a blast, I can't wait to experience this masterpiece in full four-player glory. —CODY M.

MORE ON:

SKYLANDERS: SPYRO'S ADVENTURE

16
299
Terrafin

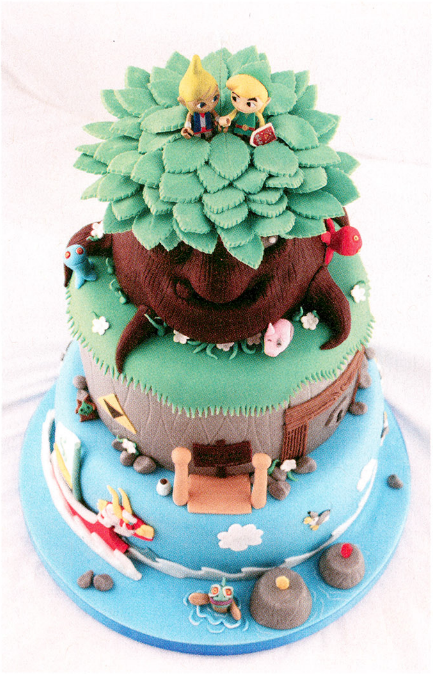
While working on last issue's Skylanders: Giants feature, I ended up hooked on the original Wii game. It may not be terribly complicated, but it's perfect for when I want to chill out, run around, and collect loot. Of course, Skylanders also speaks to my love of cool toys, so I'm finding myself spending way too much money on the figures that accompany the game. Does anyone have a Legendary Spyro that they're willing to sell cheap? —PHIL T.

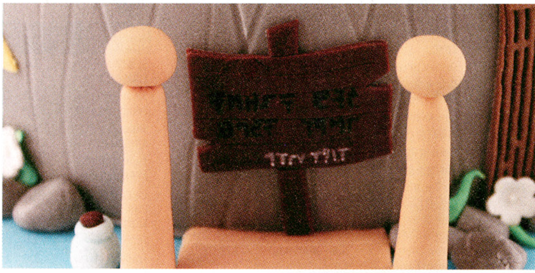
Bit.Trip Complete	9.0	Aksys	271	E
Captain America: Super Soldier	5.5	Sega	270	T
Cars 2: The Video Game	7.0	Disney	269	E10+
Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion XL	6.0	Crave	274	E10+
Centipede: Infestation	6.5	Atari	273	E10+
Conduit 2	7.5	Sega	266	T
Disney Universe	4.5	Disney	273	E10+
Driver San Francisco	4.5	Ubisoft	271	T
Epic Mickey	8.5	Disney	263	E
FIFA Soccer 12	8.0	EA Sports	272	E
Fishing Resort	7.5	Xseed	273	E
Fortune Street	7.5	Nintendo	274	E
Go Vacation	7.0	Namco Bandai	273	E10+
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	4.0	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
Kirby's Return to Dream Land	8.5	Nintendo	272	E10+
Kung Fu Panda 2	2.5	THQ	268	E10+
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	7.0	Warner Bros.	274	E10+
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	9.5	Nintendo	274	E10+
LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean: The Video Game	7.0	Disney	268	E10+
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	8.0	LucasArts	266	E10+
Lost In Shadow	8.0	Hudson	263	E10+
Madden NFL 12	7.0	Electronic Arts	271	E
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	7.0	Sega	273	E
Mario Party 9	8.0	Nintendo	276	E
Mario Sports Mix	8.0	Nintendo	264	E
Mystery Case Files: The Malgrave Incident	6.0	Nintendo	269	E
NASCAR 2011: The Game	3.0	Activision	269	E
PokéPark 2: Wonders Beyond	5.5	Nintendo	276	E
Rango	5.0	Paramount	266	E10+
Rayman Origins	9.5	Ubisoft	273	E10+
Rhythm Heaven Fever	8.0	Nintendo	276	E
Rio	4.0	THQ	267	E
Rune Factory: Tides of Destiny	8.0	Natsume	272	E10+
Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure	7.0	Activision	273	E10+
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	7.0	Activision	273	T
SpongeBob SquigglePants	7.0	THQ	266	E
Super Mario All-Stars	9.0	Nintendo	263	E
Thor: God of Thunder	5.5	Sega	267	T
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters	8.5	Electronic Arts	266	E
Top Spin 4	7.0	2K Sports	266	E
Transformers: Dark of the Moon–Stealth Force Edition	3.0	Activision	270	E10+
TRON: Evolution–Battle Grids	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
Virtua Tennis 4	8.0	Sega	267	E
Wii Play: Motion	7.5	Nintendo	268	E10+
Worms: Battle Islands	7.0	THQ	264	E10+
WWE '12	6.5	THQ	274	T
WWE All Stars	6.5	THQ	266	T
X-Men Destiny	2.5	Activision	273	T

Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Aliens: Infestation	8.0	Sega	272	T
ATV Wild Ride	7.0	Destineer	264	E
Bejeweled 3	8.5	PopCap	274	E
Camping Mama: Outdoor Adventures	5.0	Majesco	271	E
Captain America: Super Soldier	3.5	Sega	270	E10+
de Blob 2	8.0	THQ	265	E
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation	7.5	Nintendo	265	T
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker 2	7.5	Nintendo	271	E
Fossil Fighters: Champions	8.0	Nintendo	273	E
Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective	9.0	Capcom	263	T
Giana Sisters DS	9.0	Destineer	265	E
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	3.5	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns DS	8.0	Natsume	272	E
Kingdom Hearts Re:coded	8.0	Square Enix	263	E10+
Kirby Mass Attack	8.0	Nintendo	271	E
Kung Fu Panda 2	4.5	THQ	268	E10+
LEGO Battles: Ninjago	7.5	Warner Bros.	267	E
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	8.0	LucasArts	266	E
Naruto Shippuden: Shinobi Rumble	6.0	Tomy	264	T
Plants vs. Zombies	9.0	PopCap	264	E10+
Professor Layton and the Last Specter	8.5	Nintendo	272	E10+
Rango	7.0	Paramount	266	E
Rio	5.5	THQ	267	E
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2	8.0	Atlus	276	T
Solatorobo: Red the Hunter	9.0	Xseed	271	E10+
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	5.0	Activision	273	E10+
Thor: God of Thunder	6.0	Sega	267	E10+
Transformers: Dark of the Moon–Autobots/Decepticons	3.0	Activision	270	E10+
TRON: Evolution	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
X-Men Destiny	2.0	Activision	273	E10+

COMMUNITY





The details on this cake are astounding. Check out that sign!

FANDOM

The Cake Waker

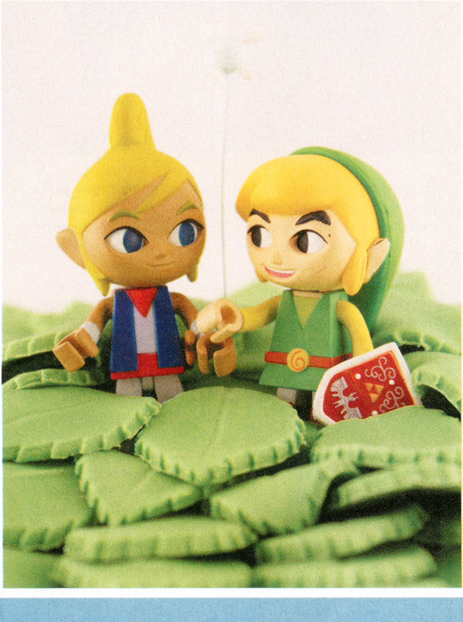
Set sail on the buttercream seas.

THIS AMAZING The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker–inspired wedding cake comes from Tracey Harvey, the 24-year-old proprietor of Little Cherry Cake Company in Rossendale, Lancashire, England. Working from her home kitchen, the self-taught Harvey created the stunningly accurate confection almost entirely from cake, icing, and buttercream—only the internal supports and figurine toppers are inedible—using screenshots and gameplay videos she found online.

Harvey says the bride is a die-hard Zelda fan who wanted to include Nintendo's beloved franchise in her most special day, but let the baker work her own magic with the design. Using a couple of round sponge cakes as the base, Harvey created this beautiful tribute to the 2003 GameCube classic, including a ton of little details all around the edible canvas. Her work on the cake-based tree is especially noteworthy due to the intricate markings on the trunk and individual leaves. "When you're a hardcore fan of something, it's fun to recognize all the little details that other people don't have a clue about," she explains. "It was so much fun to make."

She's since also designed Zelda-inspired cupcakes and a Super Mario cake, among other video game–themed creations. We hope to see more of her work turning pixels into pastries in the future. —**ANDREW H.**

[Below] It's pretty incredible that the internal structure and these amazing Tetra and Link toppers are the only inedible parts of this cake.



TAKE *your best* SHOT

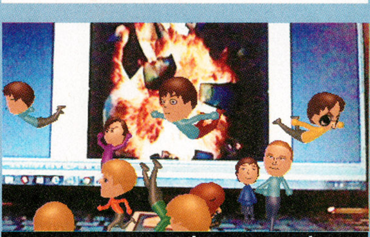
PHOTO CHALLENGE

SEND YOUR PICS TO photos@nintendopower.com.

Use your Nintendo DSi or Nintendo 3DS system to snap a fun, gaming-related photo that matches this month's theme, then transfer the image to a computer using an SD card reader and e-mail it to the above address. We'll print the best ones.

THIS MONTH'S THEME: APRIL FOOLS' DAY

VOLUME 275'S THEME: THE YEAR 2012



PHOTOGRAPH FROM [NO NAME GIVEN]

PHOTOGRAPH FROM MIKE S.

PHOTOGRAPH FROM GAGE L.

READERS UNDER THE AGE OF 18 MUST GET A PARENT'S PERMISSION TO SUBMIT A PHOTO.

ABOVE *and* BEYOND

Got art, cosplay, case mods, etc.? Send them to us via email to **community@nintendopower.com** or via snail mail to Nintendo Power/Community c/o Future US, 4000 Shoreline Court, STE 400, South San Francisco, CA 94080. We'll print the best stuff!

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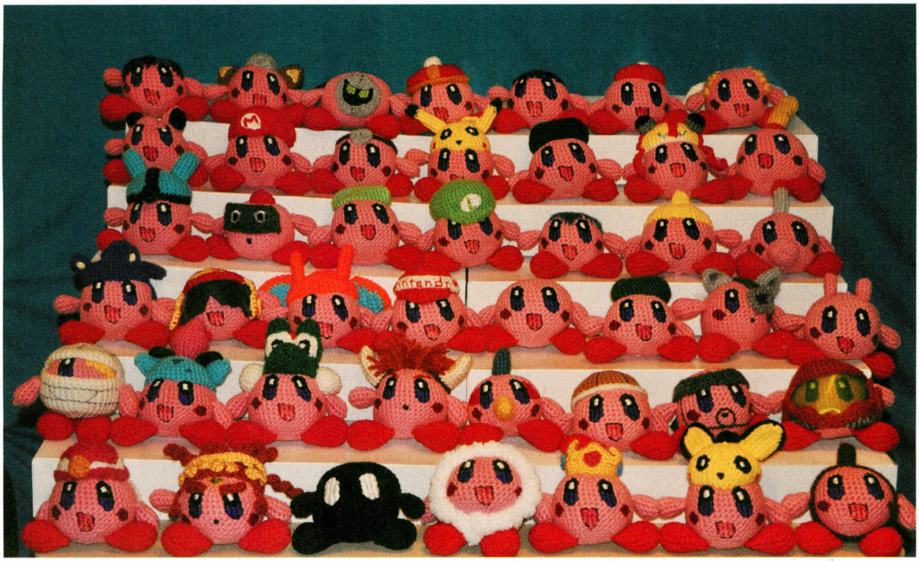
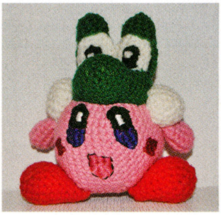


Seeing all the Kirbys displayed like this really makes us appreciate how much work Jessica Hickey put into this endeavor. It's truly impressive!

FANDOM

Many Hats

Virtual Smash Bros. lids inspire these homemade Kirby plushes.

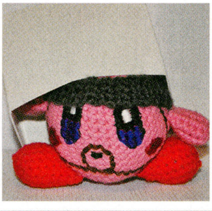


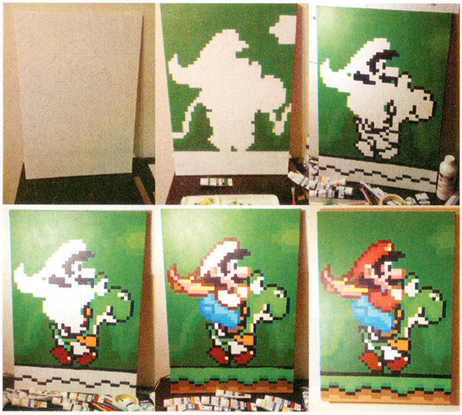
KIRBY'S UNIQUE ABILITIES allow him to take on the skills of swallowed opponents, and in the Super Smash Bros. games that also means wearing a hat inspired by a copied foe. But in the able hands of Jessica Hickey, a 22-year-old teacher from Branford, Connecticut, the pink puffball transformed into 44 plush toys, each wearing one of the familiar hats from the beloved fighting franchise.

The project spanned a year and a half during Hickey's final year in college and her student-teaching. The idea came from her boyfriend, and while it initially seemed absurd, she took on the task in the hopes of finally completing a full set after five years of crocheting various plushes. "I wanted to challenge myself in both skill and determination," she admits. "I think by that point, my boyfriend was wondering if I was the one who was insane."

With the whole project planned from the start, Hickey tackled it like an assembly line, working on crocheting the pink bodies before embroidering the facial features—the most time-consuming part, which she says drove her "the most insane." Finally she injected a little personality into each plush with the colorful hats inspired by classic Nintendo characters as seen in the Smash Bros. games.

Mario, Pikachu, Samus Aran, Solid Snake, and 40 others are represented in the set, and once it was completed, Hickey almost couldn't comprehend what she had accomplished. "I kind of looked at them in shock for a while, not believing I actually finished them," she claims. "Honestly, it felt almost bittersweet to have them all done." If the upcoming Smash Bros. game for Wii U introduces fresh fighters and Kirby hats, it may be back to the assembly line for Hickey! —**ANDREW H.**





FANDOM

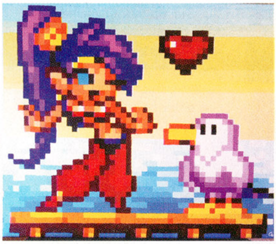
Painting by Pixels

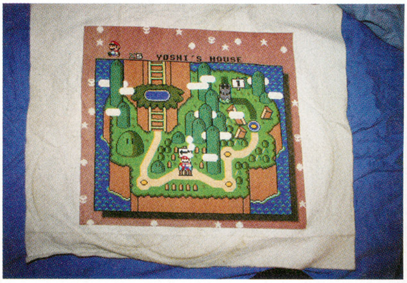
Canvases and some fan-favorite Nintendo characters make nice pals.

A LOVE OF 16-bit-era pixel art is what drew Austin Ivansmith, a Los Angeles-based designer in the video game industry, to take on a job as director at WayForward—the studio known for crafting pixelated heavy-hitters hits like Shantae, Aliens: Infestation, and Mighty Switch Force. So it only seems natural that his affection for blocky virtual art would spill over into the real world. After being inspired by pixel-art fan creations he stumbled upon in the pages of Nintendo Power, Ivansmith set out to craft his own pixel paintings, starting with a scene from his favorite game, Super Mario World.

“Art has always been a part of my life,” he explains. “With my paintings I want to re-create the pure form of the pixel art and set the characters in an environment a player would see within the game, framing it in a way which would not compromise the feel of the original but also giving the painting a unique feel all its own.”

Drawing out a grid of half-inch squares and plotting out each hand-painted pixel for the Super Mario World tableau sounds like painstaking work, but the end result is simply fantastic. Ivansmith’s subsequent depiction of Shantae from Risky’s Revenge is equally vibrant. His next project in the works is a group character portrait from Super Mario Bros. 2, and he hopes to eventually tackle Super Metroid. We’re envious of what his walls must look like. **—NATHAN M.**





FANDOM

Mario Mapmaker

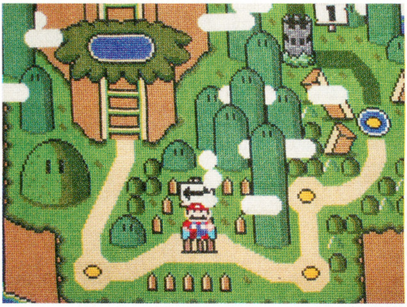
A stitch and some time save Dinosaur Land.

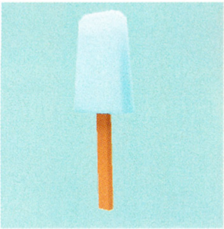
ART HAS THE amazing ability to transport a viewer to another point in his life. Erik Baxter of Sheffield, England, knows this—that’s why he spent half of 2011 crafting this cross-stitch of Super Mario World’s opening map screen.

“Once I’d started, it got hard to put down!” gushes Baxter. He really threw himself into it, staying up late and even bringing it with him to friends’ houses so he could keep plugging away at this enormous undertaking.

With this, his *fourth* Mario-related cross-stitch, he knew he had to outdo himself. Using computer programs to enlarge a copy of the pixelated screen so it resembled a cross-stitch pattern, he was able to replicate the design with a needle and thread. Baxter reflects that the hardest part of all was matching the colors so the result looked authentic.

Baxter isn’t sure when he’ll have enough time to outdo himself again, but he predicts, “If I were bonkers I’d consider [doing a cross-stitch] map of Hyrule.... That might have to wait till I’m old and in a home.” **—DAVID W.**





FANDOM

What to Feed Your Inner Plumber

A UK blogger unlocks the recipes in her favorite games.

ANYONE WHO'S EVER SAID video games can't teach you anything has obviously never been to Daniella Zelli's sublime blog, Gourmet Gaming (www.gourmetgaming.co.uk). It's a repository of real recipes for imaginary dishes served up in games. And of course, you can't write about games without including Nintendo, and in its first few months of existence the blog has featured a number of NES- and Super NES-game-related recipes.

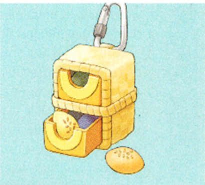
"I realized that food in games can be really iconic, like Mario and his 1-Up Mushrooms," explains Zelli. "I had wanted to start a gaming blog for a while, so I decided I'd just combine the two and see where things went.... Food in games is a part of the humanity of a video game. Everyone has to eat, even the hero if he wants to continue on his journey."

And true to her word, Zelli has been posting a new recipe every Wednesday. The Nintendo ones have been both a blessing and a major challenge. Bear in mind that Zelli has no background in baking or cooking, so in a sense, games—and not Cooking Mama!—are teaching her how to become a wizard in the kitchen. The recipe that's given her the biggest challenge to date was the Kingdom Hearts II sea-salt ice cream, but even that she was able to get right eventually.

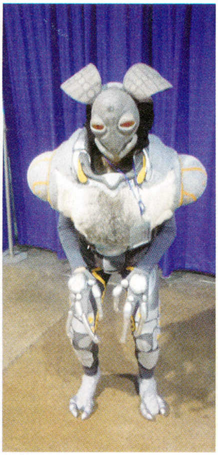
One of Zelli's tastiest recipes is undoubtedly the peanut cheese bar from EarthBound, which was one of the items most requested by her readers. Because she hadn't played EarthBound before undertaking the recipe, the odd snack was a bit of a mystery to her. But once she figured it out, she became a fan—hopefully enough of one to go back and play that Super NES classic.

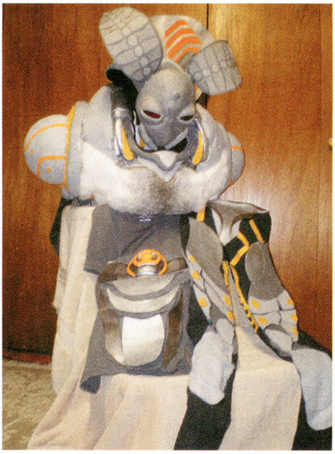
Whether she's played a particular game or not, though, her process is the same, she tells us: "I'll often research the traditional versions [of similar dishes] first and see what kind of basic techniques or ingredients might be required and then I'll tweak and add new things to make it how I want. The research is a very important and time-consuming step—baking in particular has a rigid science to its roots if you want the final result to be edible. You can't just start adding random amounts of eggs and flour and hope for the best. The same goes with cooking and combining flavors. Certain tastes will just never go together."

When asked whether she thinks her dishes have the same mana-restoring or leveling-up abilities as their game counterparts, Zelli notes that spicy foods, like Kirby's curry from Super Smash Bros. Brawl, actually make her feel "quite powerful." —**DAVID W.**



We don't know about you, but looking at these pictures is making us hungry. If you'd like to try any of these tasty treats, you can try cooking them for yourself. Daniella Zelli posts all the recipes on her site, www.gourmetgaming.co.uk.





COSPLAY

Living Luminoth

A lesser-known Metroid creature gets its cosplay due.

WHEN IT COMES TO Metroid-inspired cosplay, the obvious choice is Samus Aran and her iconic suit of armor—and we've featured several great homespun costumes in these pages. But the many Metroid-series entries offer other worthwhile subjects for cosplayers, such as the Torizo boss from Super Metroid, which reader Daniel Cattell nailed with his 16-bit rendition profiled in Vol. 272.

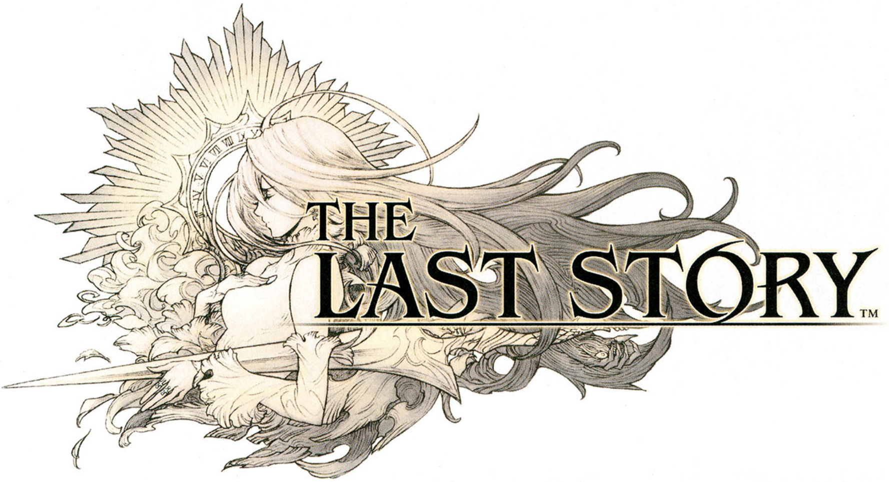
Inspired by Cattell's creation, Gioia Marzullo decided to dig even deeper into the series lore for her Luminoth cosplay creation, which captures the look and feel of the species first seen in Metroid Prime 2: Echoes. The 17-year-old Chicago native decided to create the costume after seeing a dearth of non-Samus cosplay at the Anime Central convention in nearby Rosemont. "To add some flare to the cosplaying world of Metroid, I decided I was going to step out of the shadow of one of Nintendo's greatest characters," she explains.

Doing so required nearly a year and a half of work, including the scrapping of an original prototype for being too bulky to fit the uniquely proportioned character. Marzullo created the upper torso from hot-glued cardboard strips and newspaper, and used clay for various details. Several layers of paint and fabric cover the body, while the mask—perhaps the most essential part of the re-creation—employs a similar cardboard and newspaper base, which was covered in sand and paint and then adorned with clay and feathers made from paper and pipe cleaners.

Marzullo estimates that she spent about $100 on materials to bring this Luminoth to life. She next plans to create her own Golden Torizo, though hopefully it'll hold up a little better than her previous creation when worn to a convention. "If anyone finds a missing Luminoth toe on the streets of Rosemont, that is mine," she concedes.

—ANDREW H.

PHOTOS: BENNY HERRERA



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NEXT MONTH

It's an embarassment of riches for RPG fans. Hot on the heels of the awesome Xenoblade Chronicles comes the Wii console's next potential role-playing masterpiece: The Last Story from Final Fantasy creator Hironobu Sakaguchi—and we'll have an in-depth look next month. Speaking of Final Fantasy, expect news on that franchise making its rhythm-infused debut on Nintendo 3DS.

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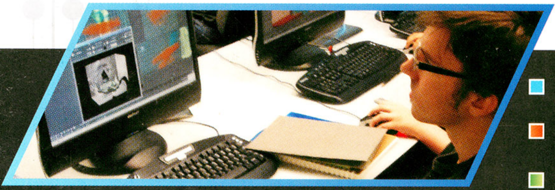

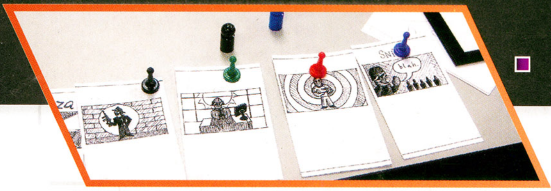

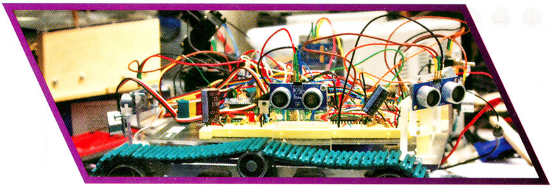

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